

Hafa Adai!

Guma Hustisia temporarily closed. **PAGE 2**

CPA gets \$532,983 for airport concessionaires. **PAGE 3**

\$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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134 new cases; 669 recovered

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A total of 134 new positive cases of COVID-19 were confirmed from Dec. 10 to 11, bringing the CNMI's case total to 1,908, according to a Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. news release late Sunday.

AT A GLANCE

As of 6:07pm, Dec. 13, 2021

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population
Fully Vaccinated: **91.3%**

Days since last community transmission **2**

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	35,503
Fully Vaccinated:	32,777
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,247
Fully Vaccinated:	4,809
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,102

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	19,308	17	19,325
Recovered	18,773	15	18,788
Active	251	17	268
Deaths	267	2	269

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	1,774	134	1,908
Traced via Travel Screening	274	0	274
Traced via Community Screening	1,500	134	1,634
Deaths	6	0	6

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., <https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/>

CHCC also reported that, as of Dec. 11, there have been 669 recoveries, 945 active cases, and three COVID-19-related deaths since Oct. 28, 2021.

Of the new 134 cases, 86 were identified on Dec. 10 and 48 were identified on Dec. 11. CHCC also reported that of the 134, 61 were

See 134 on Page 4

11 DAYS
BEFORE CHRISTMAS

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:

- Red: Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- Green: Safest

Source: Office of the Governor



ANTIGEN TESTING

Community members line up in their cars for COVID-19 antigen testing that the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. is conducting in collaboration with the Department of Fire & Emergency Medical Services. Currently, three fire stations are conducting the drive-thru testing operation: Kagman, Garapan, and Susupe, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, from 8am to 4pm on all days. Yesterday was the first day of this testing effort.

JOSHUA SANTOS

Story on
Page 4

SMA to take up fee subsidy talks with NMI govt

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Star Marianas Airlines Inc. says it will discuss Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' recent proposal to fully subsidize the airlines' airport usage fees directly with the governor instead of going

See SMA on Page 4



King-Hinds



Christian

Source: Torres unlikely to appear before JGO today

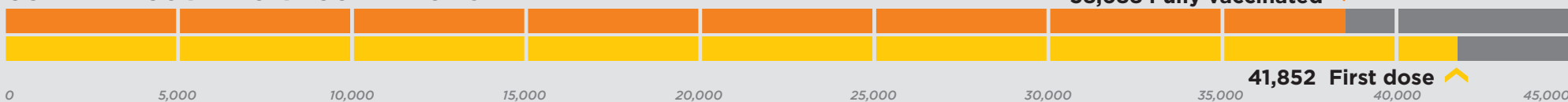
By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres is not likely to appear today, Tuesday, before the House of Representatives Judi-

ciary and Governmental Operations Committee, which is investigating his expenditures of public funds and travels.

A source said Torres, See TORRES on Page 4

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Source: [vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/](https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/)

INSIDE



BUSINESS

Atkins Kroll unveils the all-new 2022 Lexus NX at the Lexus Grand Showcase.

PAGE 11



NATION

Dozens of people in several Kentucky counties are believed to have died from massive tornadoes.

PAGE 12



LIFE & STYLE

Harnaaz Sandhu of India is crowned the 70th Miss Universe, topping a field of 80 contestants.

PAGE 15



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Local

Rota delegation appropriates \$1M from IPI for referral patients, other programs

» **Delegation amends local bill to address Manibusan's concern, other allotment changes**

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

The Rota Legislative Delegation passed Thursday a local bill that proposes to appropriate to Rota for referral patients, among other programs, Rota's \$1 million share of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's \$15 million license fee that was paid to the CNMI government two years ago.

At the session in the Senate chamber, all delegation members—Sens. Teresita A. Santos (Ind-Rota), Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota), and Victor B. Hocog (R-Rota), and Rep. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota)—voted “yes” to House Local Bill 22-23, S1.

The delegation amended the bill to reflect changes in the allocation amounts and address the concern of Attorney General Edward Manibusan about a “problematic” provision in the legislation.

Santos, who is the delegation co-chair, told *Saipan Tribune* over the weekend that with the amended bill, there is no fiscal limitations and no re-programming of the funding.

She said the legislation will be forwarded to the Torres-Palacios administration for review and action.

“It is hoped that, after the enactment of HLB 22-23, S1, the subsistence allowance for our terminally ill and dialysis patients, including stipends for our medical referral patients and escorts, are processed and issued to augment our patients’ needs for financial assistance,” Santos said.

Authored by Rep. Donald M. Manglona, the bill originally proposed to appropriate \$535,000 of IPI's license fee to the delegation for operations under the joint expenditure authority of the delegation or their designee.

But in a legal opinion he is-



Santos

sued last Nov. 23, Manibusan found the bill “problematic” as it appears to sidestep the constitutional gap on the legislative budget.

Manibusan said that, as he had stated in past comments to the Legislature, the appropriation to legislative delegations to fund operational costs is an end-run around the constitutional gap on the legislative budget set forth in NMI Constitution Article II, Section 16.

Manibusan said each delegation is a component unit of the Commonwealth Legislature and may not incur expenditures beyond that is established every fiscal year in the annual appropriation acts for the Legislature.

The amended bill, HLB 22-23, S1, proposes to allot \$217,924 from the \$1 million for interisland medical referral stipend for patients and their escorts under the expenditure authority of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

chief executive officer or his/her designee.

The bill proposes to allot \$290,000 for Medical Subsistence Allowance for the Rota hemodialysis and terminally-ill patients under the expenditure authority of the Finance secretary.

The legislation also proposes to allot \$68,000 to the Rota Liaison Office under the expenditure authority of the Rota mayor;

- \$45,000 shall be used to purchase a new vehicle.

- 5,000 shall be used for fuel and lubrication.

- \$3,000 for office supplies and equipment.

- \$15,000 for the Rota Health Clinic assessment of hemodialysis facility and to assess for Medicare compliance and eligibility.

The bill proposes to allot \$50,000 to purchase a vehicle for the Department of Public Safety-Rota Criminal Investigation Division and for the cost of freight under the expenditure authority of the Rota mayor.

The bill proposes to allot \$374,076 for the Rota Delegation's community programs and projects under the joint expenditure authority of the chairpersons of the delegation or their designee.

however, another provision in the statute authorizes an adjustment on the ceiling amount based on the U.S. Department of Commerce price index.

Last October, Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres notified the Senate and the House of Representatives that \$8 million of the \$15 million six-casino license fee that IPI paid is available for appropriation.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Guma Hustisia temporarily closed

The NMI Supreme Court ordered yesterday the temporary closure of the Guma Hustisia in response to the recent surge in confirmed positive COVID-19 cases in the CNMI. The temporary closure is from Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, through Friday, Dec. 17, 2021. Bail, initial appearance, arraignment, family protection, emergency and time-sensitive hearings may be set through either videoconferencing or teleconferencing means. Judiciary staff will be teleworking through the temporary closure. Kotten Tinian and Centron Hustisia will remain open, for limited purposes. To access the most recent Supreme Court COVID-19 Order, visit www.cnmilaw.org. (PR)

Power service interruption on Thursday

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the public that there will be a scheduled power service interruption on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021, from 8:30am to 2:30pm, affecting Lower Base (CUC Chlorination Storage only). The momentary outage will take place from 8:30am to 9:30am and 1:30pm to 2:30pm, affecting Lower Base (Wushin Corp.), Sadog Tasi, Capital Hill Homestead, Wireless, and Mt. Tapochau. This power outage is necessary so CUC could perform system and hardware maintenance in the Lower Base area. The traffic light in Sadog Tasi near the Mobil Gas Station will be affected. CUC water wells located on Capital Hill will be affected (affecting the areas of Capital Hill, Wireless Ridge, Talafofo, Mt. Tapochau, Chalan Galaide, China Town, Upper MIHA Housing, and As Falape) may be affected based on tank level. No wastewater facility will be affected. For more information, contact the CUC Customer Hotline (236-4333) or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (<https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/>). (PR)

Public warned of rip currents, rough seas

The high surf advisory has been cancelled but dangerous rip currents are expected to persist in east facing reefs of the Marianas through Wednesday. A small craft advisory is now in effect until 6pm today, Tuesday. Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, the high risk of rip currents is expected to continue through Wednesday on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water. The public is advised to swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. East winds of 15 to 20 knots and seas of 8 to 10 feet are expected in Marianas coastal waters until 6pm Tuesday. Conditions will be hazardous to small craft. Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, to avoid navigating in hazardous conditions. (Saipan Tribune)

Emergency water service interruption

There will be a series of emergency scheduled water service interruptions on Dec. 14-17, 2021 for Commonwealth Utilities Corp. customers in Papago, San Vicente, Laolao, Tuturam and Upper Dandan. Water services will shut-off based on the schedule below:

- Dec. 14, from 8am to 4pm, for installation of the bypass system for the pressure sustaining valve assembly
- Dec. 15, from 8am to 12pm, for filling and disinfection of the new tank
- Dec. 15, from 9:30pm to Dec. 16, 6am
- Dec. 16, from 9:30pm to Friday, Dec. 17, 6am

The emergency scheduled water service interruptions are to allow CLIC's contractor for the San Vicente Water Tank Replacement Project to install a bypass system for the pressure sustaining valve assembly prior to disinfecting the newly constructed San Vicente Tank. Water service to the affected areas will resume on Friday, Dec. 17, at 6am. (PR)



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CPA gets \$532,983 for concessionaires

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Ports Authority is receiving \$532,983 from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to assist its concessionaires at three airports in the CNMI, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) over the weekend.

In his e-kilili newsletter, Sablan said the U.S. Department of Transportation announced

last week the release of the grant funds, which is part of the \$9,091,659 in emergency aid allocated to CPA.

The delegate said the \$532,983 grant funds will be used to cover rent and provide minimum annual income guarantees to airport concessionaires.

He said \$487,899 is for Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport; \$35,342 is for the Tinian International Airport; and \$9,742 is for the

Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport on Rota.

Last October, the CPA board approved to extend until this month its rent abatement program for all tenants at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport and all Saipan seaport tenants that rely on the tourism industry.

The board program provides a 50% discount on rent for airport and seaport tenants. CPA's Tenant Relief Program started in April 2020.

Australia, Japan, US to fund undersea internet cable for FSM, Kiribati, Nauru

Australia, Japan, and the United States of America have committed to assist the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Kiribati, and the Republic of Nauru to improve internet connectivity in these three Pacific nations by providing funding to build a new undersea cable.

The proposed undersea cable will provide faster, high quality, and more reliable and secure communications to approximately 100,000 people across three countries.

The six countries issued over the weekend joint statements about the new undersea cable project. The joint statements were issued by Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne, Japan Minister of Foreign Affairs Hayashi Yoshimasa, U.S. Secretary of State Antony J.

Blinken, FSM President David W. Panuelo, Kiribati President Taneti Maamau, and Nauru President Lionel Aingimea.

They said this undersea cable will support increased economic growth, drive development opportunities, and help to improve living standards as the region recovers from the severe impacts of COVID-19.

The new cable will connect Kosrae, Nauru, and Tarawa (Kiribati) with the existing HANTRU-1 cable in Pohnpei, providing internet connectivity through a submarine cable for the first time.

They said this six-country collaboration highlights their commitment to work together on critical telecommunications infrastructure and contribute to reliable and secure internet for the region.

"We will continue to coordinate closely with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to ensure this project complements investments by these institutions to enhance digital connectivity in FSM, Kiribati, and Nauru," said the leaders in the joint statements.

They said this is more than an infrastructure investment as it represents an enduring partnership to deliver practical and meaningful solutions at a time of unprecedented economic and strategic challenges in their region.

The project, they said, builds on the strong foundations of trilateral collaboration between Australia, Japan, and the United States in the Indo-Pacific, including support for Palau's undersea cable. **(Ferdie de la Torre)**



THE CENTER FOR LIVING INDEPENDENTLY



Rota's Food Pantry Success!

The CLI Team bringing the food pantry to the disability community on Rota.

The Center for Living Independently (CLI), would like to thank the Office of Rota Mayor Efraim Atalig, his lead staffer Aubrey Hocog, RT&T-Viola Hocog, Rota Merchandise-Alvalyn Cruz and Pedro Dela Cruz, Kay Christian, Flavian Hocog, and Connie San Nicolas of the Rota Office on Aging. A special thank you to CLI Rota board member, Pete Hocog, SeaBridge's Paul Blas & Mitchelle Tomokane, Saipan Shipping's April Cuevas, Saipan Stevedore's General Manager, Lee Cabrera and Managing Director, Michael Demapan, CPA's Executive Director, Chris Tenorio, Ed & Rodney Taisacan, and American President Lines (APL)-Saipan for their kind donations and help in aiding the disabilities community in Rota during these times of hardship and challenges.

Our humblest appreciation also goes out to the numerous volunteers that helped set up and distribute the food pantry. This joint effort resulted in the very success food distribution process.

Si Yu'us Ma'ase and Ghilisoo




Hafa Adai

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER



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'Confirm antigen test results through PCR tests'

By JOSHUA SANTOS

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REPORTER

The antigen COVID-19 testing that is currently available at three Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services fire stations is meant to augment—not replace—ongoing testing efforts.

A negative test means you may not be currently infected, but it does not rule out an infection.

Also, false negatives are fairly common with antigen tests, so the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. advises those who may have a positive antigen test to undergo a PCR test through community-based testing to

be most sure of your test results.

These points were emphasized by CHCC public information officer Guillermo Lifofoi yesterday in a message to *Saipan Tribune*, where he reiterated the availability of antigen tests at the three fire stations.

Also in his message yesterday, Lifofoi said that if you are a close

contact of someone positive for SARS-COV-2 and got tested through antigen testing, he and CHCC said it is important that a negative antigen test result be confirmed with a PCR test, which is currently considered the “gold standard” in COVID-19 testing.

PCR tests are available through community-based testing at the Pa-

cific Islands Club Saipan, and registration can be completed at <https://covidtesting.chcc.health>. If no dates are showing, it means all slots have been filled. “More dates will be announced,” said Lifofoi.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

Unspent PUA funds to be returned to USDOL

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

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REPORTER

Any unspent Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation funds will be sent back to the U.S. Department of Labor.

In a short interview with CNMI Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente yesterday, she said the official closeout date of the PUA/FPUC program will be June 2022, and any unspent funds under the program will be returned to USDOL after.

“The official closeout date for the CNMI PUA program is June 30, 2022, but a lot depends on the PUA cases that are filed for Appeals or Reconsideration Requests from PUA claimants. Any unspent PUA funds [for benefits] will be returned to USDOL,” she said.

Fortunately, Benavente said, ad-

judicators are working around the clock to get every eligible claim paid out and assures that the CNMI will not return any of the funds until they are absolutely certain every eligible claim has been paid.

“We won’t return a penny until we are certain everyone has been adjudicated. Even when the PUA program closes, and we still have applicants waiting for PUA benefits, those qualified for benefits will be processed and paid accordingly. If we still have pending PUA applications to process in June or July of 2022, we will still continue to adjudicate these claims,” she said.

Currently, because of the recent memo issued by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres shutting down non-essential government office, Benavente said PUA staff are currently teleworking from home. To get updates on PUA

claims, applicants must visit the DOL website for the email addresses for their respective adjudicator.

“The Department of Labor has its main administrative office open daily from 8am to 4pm, but with a skeleton crew in order to adhere to health and safety protocols. The PUA team is teleworking from home, adjudicating applications, clearing out overpayments, and assisting with follow up applicants and emails. DOL website has the public notice with contact numbers and email addresses,” she said.

According to a previous *Saipan Tribune* article, the U.S. Department of Labor allocated roughly \$700 million specifically for unemployment assistance in the CNMI. As of last September, of the \$700 million, Benavente said, only \$230 million has been used so far.

\$500 ‘utilities stimulus’ is part of original ARPA spending plan

By JOSHUA SANTOS

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REPORTER

Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig said yesterday that he and his office is working closely with the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. management to ensure that the \$500 voucher given to residential account holders is processed properly for the month of December.

Atalig added that this “utilities stimulus” initiative was a part of the CNMI government’s original spending plan of American Rescue Plan Act funding.

Atalig said that \$7.5 million is currently allocated for the “utili-

ties stimulus” but if CUC identifies more accounts that did not receive \$500, there is still time for CUC to notify the administration and be allocated more. However, based on current estimates of the number of CUC electrical residential accounts, with each account receiving \$500, Atalig said the \$7.5 million allocation should be accurate.

To his knowledge, Atalig said that CUC began uploading and crediting \$500 to these accounts on Dec. 10 and that CUC is continuing to upload these \$500 vouchers to its system.

Atalig thanked Go. Ralph DLG Torres for including the “utili-

ties stimulus” as part of the ARPA spending plan, and lauded CUC for ensuring that the \$500 vouchers are distributed smoothly to “our community that really needs this additional funding [and] support.” Atalig said this “utilities stimulus” is a one-time disbursement, but he hopes it would alleviate some financial pressures faced by the community as the holidays near.

Torres had announced during his weekly radio news briefings in early in December that the administration, working with the Department of Finance, will be giving \$500 vouchers to every CUC residential account and a \$500 bonus to retirees.

SMA

From Page 1

through the Commonwealth Ports Authority.

In a letter addressed to CPA chair Kimberlyn King-Hinds, SMA president Shaun Christian said that Star Marianas will undertake discussions about subsidies directly with the Office of the Governor.

“Since the CPA has indicated that it has no discretion in terms of abating the fees and charges and the governor’s offer to provide subsidies is seemingly tied to a request to reduce airfare prices, it seems appropriate that Star Marianas undertake the discussions about subsidies directly with the Office of the Governor. As such, the subsidies and airfare prices should not present an obstacle to the continued cooperation between Star Marianas and the CPA,” he said.

In the letter, Christian also reminds the CPA chair that even though it has

already resumed flights on a charter basis, its resumption of scheduled flights is contingent on CPA’s continued show of good faith efforts to resolve their current dispute on fee assessments.

“Since both Star [Marianas] and CPA have only reached agreement on general principles, Star’s agreement is contingent on the CPA continuing to demonstrate good faith efforts to resolve the issues raised by Star Marianas. Star Marianas has already resumed its on-demand and air taxi operations. Star Marianas is also diligently moving forward, largely based on CPA’s recent good faith gestures and assurances, to request permission from the DOT to restore commuter services to the CNMI,” he said.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, Star Marianas Air returned to operations last week, providing organized charters between all the islands.

In a short statement from Christian, he explained that the state of emergency Torres issued late last Wednes-

day evening left Star Marianas under the impression that all CPA imposed fees have been suspended. This was their main condition to CPA for them to resume interisland travel.

From here, Christian stated, they are just waiting for a go signal from the U.S. Department of Transportation to allow them to resume regular flight service.

For their part, King-Hinds reached out to the DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg to ask the department to make federal subsidy available to the CNMI through various programs offered by the DOT, including the Essential Air Service Program, the Alternative Essential Air Service Program, and the Small Community Air Service Development Program.

King-Hinds said the hope is that by being designated as an EAS-eligible community, the CNMI will be able to establish affordable and reliable interisland air travel through subsidizing commuter and certificated air carriers to serve the Rota and Tinian airports.

134

From Page 1

found through contact tracing and 73 through community-based testing. The vaccination statuses of these new cases were pending verification as of Sunday night.

For its vaccination efforts, CHCC reported that 411 COVID-19 vaccine shots were administered on Dec. 12, bringing the CNMI’s vaccination rate to 91%. Getting vaccinated and the CNMI’s high vaccination rate “affords the community more protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death,” CHCC said.

For testing efforts, a total of 1,129 COVID-19 tests were conducted between Dec. 10 and Dec. 11 comprising travel testing and surveillance testing. In the CNMI, registering for testing can be done at <https://covid-testing.chcc.health>.

Since Oct. 28, 2021, there have been 1,617 new cases. Of this total, 876 were found through contact tracing, 722 through CBT, and 19 through travel testing.

In related news, CHCC chief executive officer Esther L. Muña and Dr. Richard Brostrom, representing the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, held a virtual news briefing last Friday, where Brostrom talked about the federal health care partners’ roles in the CNMI and monoclonal antibody treatment.

Brostrom said that he and a colleague who is currently in Guam were flown out at the request of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to “help with implementation” and to provide subject matter

expertise where needed. Brostrom added that National Disaster Medical Assistance Team personnel are on Saipan to aid CHCC with the administering of monoclonal antibody treatment and with vaccination operations.

Brostrom said the monoclonal antibody treatment is readily available for those who qualify to receive it. He said that, along with the team of federal partners, a new shipment of 500 treatments is now on Saipan.

“This is a treatment for those that are positive [and] have some symptoms, and this medicine can help keep them out of the hospital. ... If people have very mild symptoms and maybe they have diabetes, [are] overweight, or [have] high blood pressure, then they would qualify for treatment that’s given at that site,” said Brostrom.

Muña reiterated that monoclonal antibody treatment is not a replacement for getting a COVID-19 vaccine. “That is not a replacement of vaccines. This is to supplement...to fight COVID and, again, it is to prevent hospitalizations. If you already have COVID and you have symptoms, you may be a candidate for this, especially if you meet the high-risk criteria,” she said.

Brostrom also lauded the medical personnel at CHCC’s hospital and at the CHCC Alternate Care Site at Kanoa Resort Saipan for their tireless work.

“I have to say that the staff there—we’ve been working with them this week—[are] amazing, determined medical staff, [nurses], and physicians. Really heroic work [is] being done here as the surge ramps up in the CNMI,” said Brostrom.

TORRES

From Page 1

through his counsel, may ask the Superior Court to intervene and quash the subpoena that commanded him to testify before the JGO today at 10:30am.

The governor refused to comment yesterday.

Torres, through Gilbert Birnbrich and Ross Garber, had questioned the JGO Committee’s authority to subpoena him as governor, citing his role as head of a separate branch of government.

At the JGO Committee’s hearing yesterday, JGO chair Rep. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) discussed her recollection of the testimony of Department of Public Safety Commissioner Robert A. Deleon Guerrero before the JGO last Friday.

Babauta said that several points in Deleon Guerrero’s testimony were

contradicted by the testimonies of other witnesses, such as the testimony of Police Lt. Emery Kaipat who testified that DPS personnel do not inspect the governor’s cargo when he goes through the airport, the testimony of Boating Safety Officer Adrien Mendiola, who testified that “sometimes the governor would use his private boat and sometimes he would be on a Boating Safety vessel,” the testimony of the head of the governor’s security, officer Joey Cruz, who testified that he receives his instructions directly from Gov. Ralph DLG Torres.

The chair said it is clear that Torres is behind the wasteful use and expenditure of scarce funds for having excessive bodyguards who are there simply to retrieve their luggage, transport their children to and from school and dental appointments, including but not limited to driving Diann Torres to weddings and other personal occasions.

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Congratulations to all the winners!

Important Legal Notice from the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida

If you are a current or former owner or lessee of certain Volkswagen or Audi vehicles, you could get cash and other benefits from a class action settlement.

Si desea recibir esta notificación en español, llámenos o visite nuestra página web.

A settlement has been reached in a class action lawsuit alleging that consumers sustained economic losses because they purchased or leased vehicles from Volkswagen AG, Volkswagen Group of America, Inc., VW Credit, Inc., Audi AG, or Audi of America, LLC (collectively "Volkswagen") containing allegedly defective airbags manufactured by Takata Corporation and its affiliates ("Takata"). The Settlement includes certain vehicles made by Volkswagen (the "Subject Vehicles"). Volkswagen denies any and all allegations of wrongdoing and the Court has not decided who is right.

If you have already received a separate recall notice for your Volkswagen or Audi vehicle and have not yet had your Takata airbag repaired, you should do so as soon as possible. When recalled Takata airbags deploy, they may, in very rare cases and under certain circumstances, spray metal debris toward vehicle occupants and may cause serious injury. However, some Volkswagen and Audi vehicles may be recalled for repair at a later date. Please see www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/takata-recall-spotlight#for-consumers-overview for further details about whether your vehicle is recalled and, if so, what you should do.

Am I included in the proposed Settlement? The Settlement includes the following persons and entities:

- Owners or lessees, as of November 10, 2021, of a Subject Vehicle that was distributed for sale or lease in the United States or any of its territories or possessions, and
- Former owners or lessees of a Subject Vehicle that was distributed for sale or lease in the United States or any of its territories or possessions, who, between February 9, 2016 and November 10, 2021, sold or returned, pursuant to a lease, a Subject Vehicle.

A full list of the Subject Vehicles can be found at www.AutoAirbagSettlement.com. The Settlement does not involve claims of personal injury.

What does the Settlement provide? Volkswagen has agreed to a Settlement with a value of approximately \$42 million, including a 20% credit for the Enhanced Rental Car/Loaner Program. The Settlement Funds will be used to pay for Settlement benefits and cover the costs of the Settlement over an approximately four-year period.

The Settlement offers several benefits for Class Members, including (1) payments for certain out-of-pocket expenses incurred related to a Takata airbag recall of a Subject Vehicle, (2) a Rental Car/Loaner Program while certain Subject Vehicles are awaiting repair, (3) an Outreach Program to maximize completion of the recall remedy, (4) additional cash payments to Class Members from residual settlement funds, if any remain, and (5) a Customer Support Program to help with repairs associated with replacement airbag inflators. The Settlement Website explains each of these benefits in detail.

How can I get a Payment? You must file a claim to receive a payment during the first four years of the Settlement. If you still own or lease a Subject Vehicle, you must also bring it to an authorized dealership for the recall remedy, as directed by a recall notice, if you have not already done so. Visit the website and file a claim online or download one and file by mail. The deadline to file a claim will be at least one year from the date the Settlement is finalized. All deadlines will be posted on the website when they are known.

What are my other options? If you do not want to be legally bound by the Settlement, you must exclude yourself by **February 14, 2022**. If you do not exclude yourself, you will release any claims you may have against Volkswagen and the Released Parties, in exchange for certain settlement benefits. The potential available benefits are more fully described in the Settlement, available at the Settlement Website. You may object to the Settlement by **February 14, 2022**. You cannot both exclude yourself from, and object to, the Settlement. The Long Form Notice for the Settlement available on the website listed below explains how to exclude yourself or object. The Court will hold a fairness hearing on **March 7, 2022** to consider whether to finally approve the Settlement and a request for attorneys' fees of up to 30% of the total Settlement Amount. You may appear at the fairness hearing, either by yourself or through an attorney hired by you, but you don't have to. For more information, including the relief, eligibility and release of claims, in English or Spanish, call or visit the website below.

1-888-735-5596

www.AutoAirbagSettlement.com

UOG Drone Corps has its 1st batch of FAA-certified pilots

The University of Guam Drone Corps program has produced its first 12 Federal Aviation Administration-certified drone pilots with more to come.

The 12 students passed the FAA exam this semester and are now earning flight hours through internships, simulator trainings, and missions assisting local researchers and agencies.

Launched in April 2021, the Drone Corps is a combined effort from NASA Guam Space Grant and NASA Guam EPSCoR programs at the University of Guam to meet the demand for the island's rising drone industry by creating a cadre of FAA-certified pilots.

Upon acceptance into and completion of a three-week preparatory knowledge course, students scheduled their FAA Part 107b certification exam, which grants successful members a two-year Remote Pilot license necessary to safely fly drones through Guam's skies.

As a U.S. territory, Guam falls under federal regulations for both recreational and commercial drone activity. A primary goal of the UOG Drone Corps program is to train students to be knowledgeable of these regulations and to preemptively avoid drone accidents and minimize potential conflicts through responsible use.

Throughout the program's sessions and training workshops, students learned about drone components and proper storage, drone operations and mechanics, various flight conditions, appropriate times and locations for flight, types of flight zones, remote-to-drone signals, and more.

Building experience through flight time

Now with their licenses, the students are expected to fulfill 40 hours of flight time through simulator training, internships, and missions providing aid to



UOG Drone Corps member Anthony Luces gets hands-on experience with a drone provided by Drone Optics Guam during a Dec. 4 workshop.

NASA GUAM SPACE GRANT

UOG researchers, local government agencies, or nonprofit organizations.

Thor Hauerbach, a sophomore studying business administration, is interning at Tech Center Guam and is also part of a team that is developing curriculum to facilitate remote pilot training for the Guam Fire Department.

"In the past months, I have spent numerous hours on the DJI Enterprise simulator, both doing skill training exercises and free flight, and have also had the privilege to fly real drones in the field," Hauerbach said.

Hauerbach has also obtained other certifications related to drone flight through his internship.

The hands-on experience will equip the students when entering the workforce with the ability to incorporate drone technology in various sectors of the economy, including construction, environmental mapping, infrastructure inspection, and emergency services.

Promoting local businesses was one of the reasons Drone Corps member and computer science major Christopher Salas wanted to be a certified drone

pilot. Throughout his work experience in real estate, Salas realized the potential in drone usage for marketing, surveying, and mapping materials.

"The most fulfilling aspect [of the program] was to educate myself of the actual intricacies of being a drone pilot," Salas said. "In the beginning, my mindset was, 'How hard is it to actually fly a drone? Why does anyone need a pilot license?' When I learned more and more, I realized just how technical, precision-based, and detail-oriented it was to fly drones."

The UOG Drone Corps program's inaugural term is ongoing, with the next set of members slated to take their FAA exam early next year.

Join the Drone Corps

Applications to join the next Drone Corps cohort are expected to open in May. Current and incoming UOG students as well as UOG faculty and staff interested in learning more about the program can contact Keano Fausto, communications coordinator of NASA Guam Space Grant, at faustok9679@triton.uog.edu

About UOG Drone Corps

The University of Guam Drone Corps is the institution's first drone certification and training program for undergraduate and graduate students, staff, and faculty. The program aims to build technical capacity by creating a cadre of FAA-licensed, informed, and responsible pilots through knowledge courses, training workshops, and hands-on flying opportunities.

Collaboratively administered by the NASA Guam EPSCoR and NASA Guam Space Grant programs at the University of Guam, the UOG Drone Corps is focused on increasing education and awareness of drone technology through responsible use. (PR)



UOG Drone Corps members watch Teddy Estrellado, technical director of Drone Optics Guam, prepare for a drone flight during a Dec. 4 workshop.

NASA GUAM SPACE GRANT

Woman accuses dental clinic of burning her child's face

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A woman is suing the Seventh-day Adventist Dental Clinic and others in Superior Court, claiming that the clinic's negligence resulted in her child's face being burned, leaving her with a disfigured facial scar.

Daelina Aguon, through attorney Joseph Horey, is suing the Seventh-day Adventist Dental Clinic and Dr. Steven Debulgado on the grounds of negligence after her daughter's face was allegedly burned by one of the machines that was used dur-

ing a procedure back in 2020.

Aguon, on behalf of her minor child, is suing for unspecified damages for alleged pain, suffering, and emotional distress.

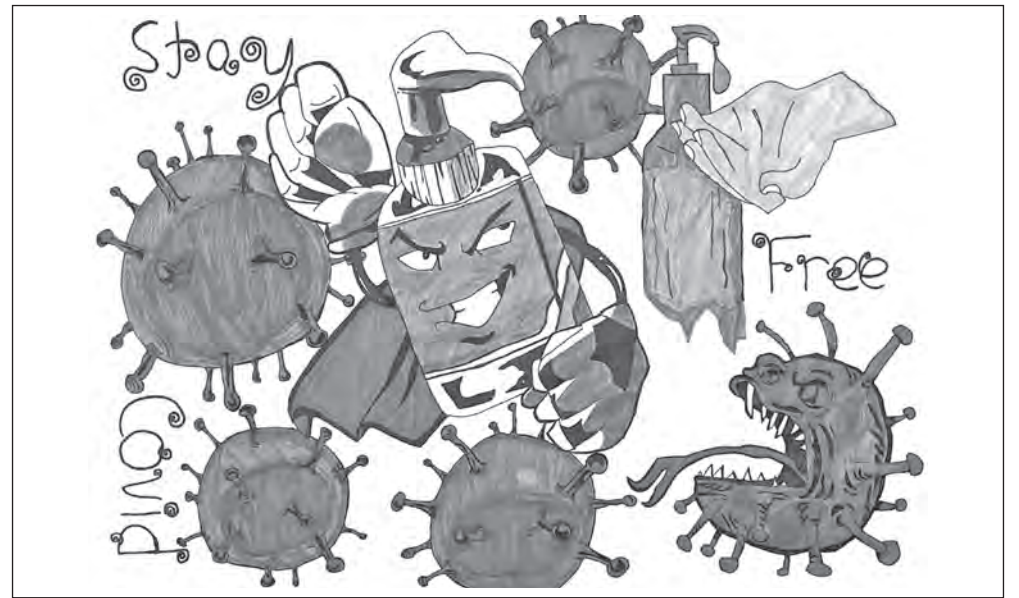
According to the lawsuit, back on Jan. 15, 2020, the child visited the SDA clinic to have silver crowns put on some of her teeth. The crown application procedure was performed by Debulgado.

As the child was getting the silver crown put on, the "hot metal applicator machine" allegedly burned her face, creating a large open lesion at the corner of her mouth. However, because

the child was under anesthesia, she was allegedly unaware that her face was being burned by the machine. According to the lawsuit, neither Debulgado nor any of the other employees noticed that the child's face was being burned by the machine.

When the anesthesia wore off, the child became aware of her injury, and suffered acute pain, suffering and distress, the lawsuit stated. The child's wound gradually healed, but continued to cause discomfort and distress to her for several weeks.

The lawsuit said that, as the wound healed, it left a disfiguring facial scar, which remains to this day.



WINNING ARTWORK

Artwork by Pacifica Insurance Underwriters, Inc.'s 8th Annual Pacifica Art Contest category 2 winner Earle San Nicolas from Mount Carmel School. This year's theme: "Stay Covid-19 free". For Contest information, log on to www.pacificains.com/artcontest and follow Pacifica's Facebook and Instagram accounts. Artworks are on display at their office in Susupe for public viewing. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Coast Guard supports EEZ enforcement in Palau

SANTA RITA, Guam—Last week, the U.S. Coast Guard responded to a request from the Republic of Palau to assist with locating the Chinese-flagged research vessel *Da Yang Hao* and observe its activity.

The 4,600-ton vessel entered Palau's exclusive economic zone on Nov. 29. On Nov. 30, Joint Rescue Coordination Center Honolulu received a notification from the Palau Division of Maritime Security that the *Da Yang Hao* was observed north of Kayangel State within Palau's EEZ without proper authorization.

The government of Palau requested assistance from the Coast Guard pursuant to the U.S.-Palau bilateral law enforcement agreement. JRCC Honolulu deployed a Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point HC-130 Hercules aircraft to locate the research vessel and confirm the vessel was not in distress given its varying course and minimal speed while operating in the Palauan EEZ.

"The Coast Guard is a critical component of stability and governance in the Indo-Pacific," said Capt. Nicholas Simmons, commander of Coast Guard Forces Micronesia | Sector Guam. "The Service is an enduring presence in Oceania, and is proud to support partner nations by assisting them to patrol their waters, enforce their laws, and pro-

tect natural resources within their EEZs."

The Coast Guard maintains 11 bilateral law enforcement agreements with Pacific Island Countries and Territories throughout Oceania, allowing partner nations to work toward common goals such as preventing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The *Hercules* aircrew arrived on scene and located the research vessel approximately 100 nautical miles west northwest of the main Palauan island of Babeldaob transiting at slow speeds eastbound.

The *Da Yang Hao* communicated to the *Hercules* aircrew via radio that they were conducting storm avoidance. A subsequent overflight the following day relocated the research vessel transiting slowly north approximately 190 nautical miles northwest of the islands, approaching the limits of Palau's EEZ.

"The U.S. Coast Guard is Oceania's Coast Guard, remaining steadfast in saving lives and championing maritime governance throughout our area of responsibility, which includes Palau. We remain committed to collaborating and strengthening our long standing partnerships in the region given the Coast Guard's unique authorities, missions, relationships and access," said Capt. Craig O'Brien, Chief of Response, Coast Guard 14th District. **(USCG)**

MAP grants for FY '22 now open to insular areas

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs announced last week that applications for fiscal year 2022 funding under the Maintenance Assistance Program may now be submitted to Grants.Gov for funding consideration to support the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the CNMI, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as the freely associated states—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

"The Maintenance Assistance Program is meant to encourage and support the development, improvement, and institutionalization of maintenance practices in the insular areas," said deputy assistant secretary Keone Nakoa. "We are especially interested in activities

that will support maintenance training to extend the life of island infrastructure, ensure the safety of maintenance technicians, and/or increase the capacity of infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events."

Maintenance Assistance Program funding is available for projects intended to develop insular institutions that improve the operation and maintenance of infrastructure in the island areas. MAP funds may also be used on occasion

for limited repairs, including climate change related repairs and repairs needed to prevent future damage. Applications will be considered from insular government entities, educational institutions, or non-profit organizations whose grant proposals directly benefit the four U.S. territories or three freely associated states.

More information about financial grant assistance may be found on the OIA website along with the specific MAP

2022 instructions. To apply, visit grants.gov and use CFDA #15.875. The deadline for submissions is April 1, 2022; however, it is highly recommended that applications be submitted as early as possible. Applications will be reviewed beginning May 2022 once OIA receives full-year appropriations. Applications related to public safety and emergencies will be reviewed in a timely manner, prior to the April deadline. **(PR)**

COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
1 Lower Navy Hill Road Navy Hill, Saipan, MP 96950

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY

INVITATION TO BID (ITB)
ITB22-CHCC/EHDP/ELC-CDI-007
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: DECEMBER 27, 2021 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"LEASE OF VEHICLES"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS INVITATION TO BID FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE (WWW.CHCC.GOV.MP). ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR, CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

ROBERT TENORIO TORRES F0197
ATTORNEY AT LAW
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Tel. (670) 234-7859 | Fax. (670) 234-5749
E-mail: robert.torres@rttlawgroup.com
Attorney for Petitioner Jennifer M. Villagomez,

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE MATTER) Civil Action
OF THE ESTATE OF) No. 21-0316

SUSANA TENORIO) NOTICE OF HEARING
MAFNAS)
Testator.) DATE: January 6, 2022
TIME: 10:00 a.m.
JUDGE: Camacho

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Petitioner Jennifer M. Villagomez has filed a Petition for Transfer of Decedent's Personalty (Vehide) for Estate of Susana Tenorio Mafnas Pursuant to 8 CMC § 2501 in this matter. The hearing on the Petition is scheduled to be heard on the date and time set forth above at the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. All interested persons or entities should appear at this hearing.

Dated this 26th day of November, 2021.

/s/ _____
Clerk of Court/Deputy Clerk of Court

NMTI
NORTHERN MARIANAS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

NORTHERN MARIANAS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
P.O. Box 504880 Saipan MP 96950
Tel. No.: (670) 323.6601
Procurement Office

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP-NMTI/2022-001

Northern Marianas Technical Institute Workforce Career Training Facility

The Commonwealth of the Northern Marian Islands (CNMI) is soliciting proposals from qualified consulting firms to provide professional services for the design and construction management (CM) for the Northern Marianas Technical Institute Workforce Career Training Facility (NMTI) on the island of Saipan. The Facility will be located in Koblerville, Saipan as indicated on the attached Site Plan (Attachment A). This project is being funded by a grant from the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

This solicitation is in accordance with CNMI Procurement Regulations NMIAC § 70-30.3-305. To also include provisions of CNMI Procurement Regulations, NMIAC Section §70-30.3-725 prohibiting kickbacks and gratuities, NMIAC Section §70-30.3-730 prohibition against contingent fees shall apply.

All firms submitting their RFPs may be considered as a Registered A&E firm with the CNMI pursuant to NMIAC § 70-30.3-250.

All firms must have or obtain a valid Certificate of Authorization (COA) from the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Board of Professional Licensing. Information in obtaining a COA may be requested from the CNMI Board of Professional Licensing.

A pre-proposal meeting will be held on December 28, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom Video Communication. Interested firms will be provided the video teleconference link. Firms are requested to submit a notice of their intent to participate in the pre-proposal meeting one (1) day before the meeting via email at: admin@nmtechnnmi.org. Attendance is not mandatory, but is recommended.

Inquiries regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing on or before December 21, 2021, no later than 9:00 a.m. via email to Ms. Jodina Attao, CEO at: admin@nmtechnnmi.org.

Sealed proposals for this project shall be submitted with one (1) original and four (4) copies to the NMTI Procurement Officer located at the NMTI campus, Lowerbase, Saipan, MP-96950 no later than **4:00pm, local time, Chamorro Standard Time, 01/18/2022 and must be marked "Proposal - Northern Marianas Technical Institute Workforce Career Training Facility NMTI-2022/RFP-001."** Questions regarding this solicitation should be directed to Ms. Jodina Attao, by email only at admin@nmtechnnmi.org. Electronic submissions may be accepted if approved prior to the submission deadline.

Proposals located outside of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands may obtain an additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their proposal by submitting a Notice of Intent to propose. Notice of Intent to Propose must be received by the **NMTI Procurement Office no later than 4:00pm local time, 01/25/2022, via email to amy.babauta@nmtechnnmi.org.**

For proposers located outside of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands an original and three (3) copies of sealed proposal must be postmarked by the US Postal Services of the official government postal service of foreign country **no later than 01/25/2022, and mailed to NMTI Procurement Officer at PO Box 504880 Saipan, MP 96950 and the proposal must be received no later than 02/04/2022.** Electronic submissions may be accepted if approved prior to the submission deadline.

The Project Description and Scope of Work is available beginning December 14, 2021 at the NMTI Procurement Office, located at the NMTI Main Office, Lower Base. Request may be sent via email to Ms. Amy Lynn Babauta at amy.babauta@nmtechnnmi.org.

/s/ Jodina C. Attao
CEO

/s/ Amy Lynn Babauta
Procurement Officer

Opinion

Hafa Adair

Saipan Tribune

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MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

\$1.25? What happened to the dollar store?

We're all feeling the effects of inflation these days, in everything from the price of houses, cars and health care to college educations. Yet somehow, it's the little things that stand out, and nowhere is the waning value of the dollar more obvious than in the shrinking range of products for sale at exactly \$1.

For bargain shoppers coast to coast, snagging a dollar deal has always had a special magic. But with inflation on the rise during the pandemic, holding the line on the \$1 price point is getting tougher for dollar stores, and, in many cases, consumers are being asked to pay more. Earlier this year, the Dollar Tree chain, where (unlike some other big chains with dollar in their name) nearly everything has sold for a buck, announced plans to jack up most of its assortment to \$1.25. That's a 25% increase, practically across the board.

The chain of discount variety stores explained that it's battling not just the higher cost of goods, including freight and distribution, but also higher labor costs, as Dollar Tree, which has more than 15,000 storefronts across the nation, has been forced by the labor market to raise the hourly wages it typically pays to staff its outlets. The retailer says it's confident that customers won't push back against the \$1.25 sticker price.

We're not so sure.

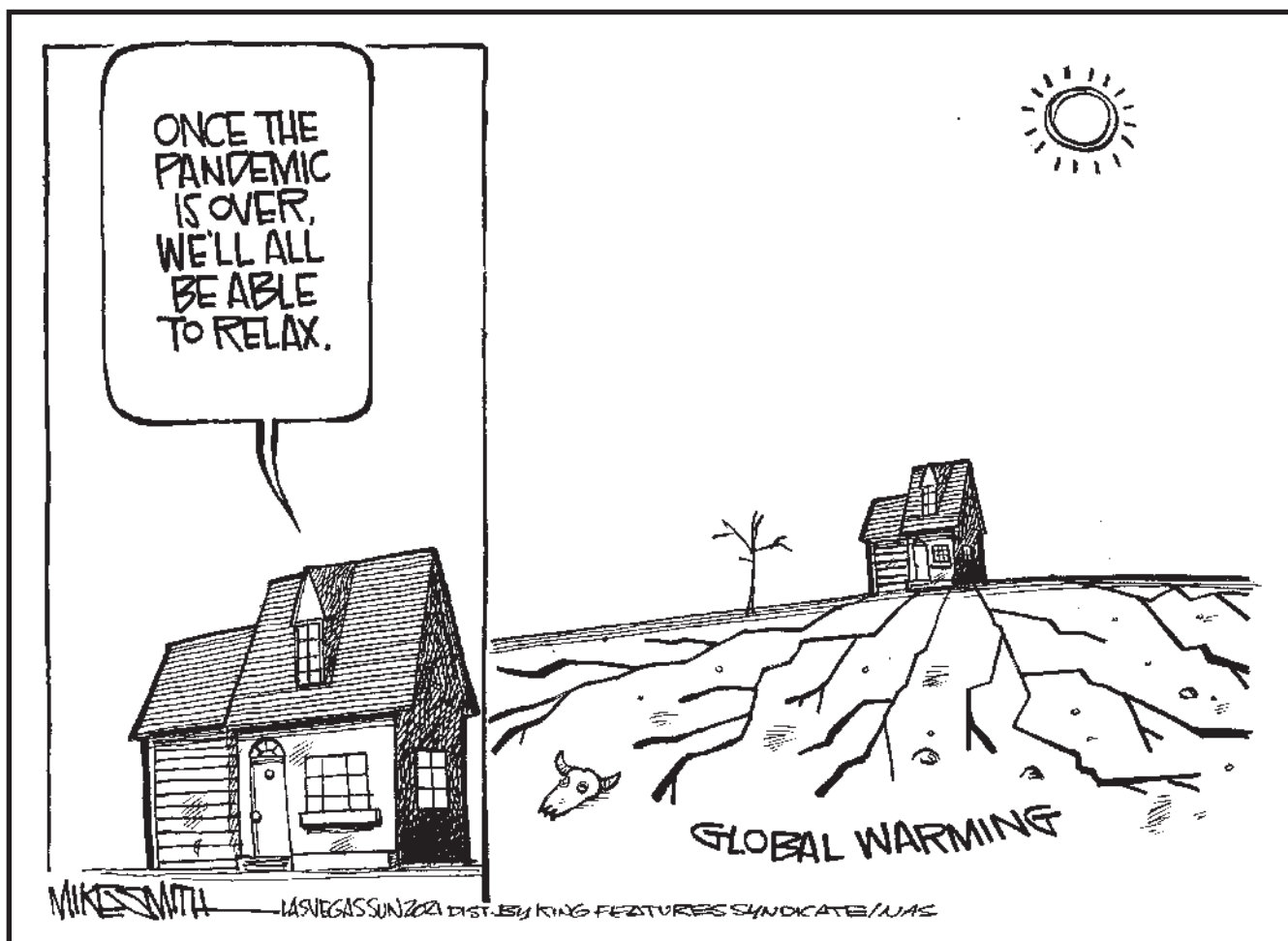
There's psychology at work in how consumers respond to inflation. The nightmare scenario for the U.S. Federal Reserve is a wage-price spiral, a continuous rise in prices where cost increases and wage increases follow each other up and up. We last experienced that in the 1970s, and many Americans alive today have no idea how painful it was: Buying power eroded, wages fell perpetually behind and hard-earned savings lost their value even when safely socked away. Individuals and businesses made buying decisions partly to avoid higher prices they expected in the future, which in turn led to more price increases.

The U.S. economy isn't trapped in that cycle yet. Despite inflation running at 6.2% in the 12 months ending Oct. 31, growth and employment are solid and supply-chain pressures won't last forever. Still, higher prices make the economy feel weaker than it is. In much the same way, buying a fast-food sandwich for \$1.09 just doesn't feel as satisfying as getting it for a buck off a dollar menu.

When shoppers process prices in a retail setting, feelings matter. People are more likely to keep their money in their pockets if prices cross a psychological barrier like the dollar mark. Consumers also tend to rebel when they think a stated price is phony, as sometimes happens with slippery come-ons and component decouplings that understate the final cost of a good or service. That's part of the beauty of the one-dollar price point: A buck's a buck—plus tax, of course, but we've long been conditioned not to see that as part of the base price.

As the value of that buck continues shrinking, the Federal Reserve is taking notice. Next week, the Fed's Open Market Committee meets to consider how to curb inflation that has hung around more stubbornly than its economists (and the administration of President Joe Biden in general) anticipated. If the Labor Department report on consumer prices due

See \$1.25? on next page



Four ways the US can keep Putin from invading Ukraine

When I became the supreme military commander at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 2009, the alliance was focused on the war in Afghanistan. But one of the first senior delegations to visit me came to discuss Russia: the military chiefs of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

I'll never forget the tone in their voices as they described the malevolence of Russian President Vladimir Putin. They had the insiders' view, as they had ascended through the ranks while their countries were part of the Soviet Union.

The three laid out a persuasive case that Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia was a dress rehearsal for further operations against democracies bordering Russia. So we rewrote the alliance's war plans for dealing with that possibility, significantly increasing the level of U.S. support for Eastern Europe.

At the time, I felt Ukraine was a likely target—a close partner to NATO, but not an actual member. And in 2014, Putin's military moved in and seized Crimea.

Seven years later, Putin is again setting in place the forces to strike Ukraine, as he seeks to fully sever its relationship with the West. What are the best tools the U.S. and European democracies can use to deter him?

The first is intelligence and strategic communications. By gathering information from all sources (human, electronic, etc.), laying it out coherently and publicizing it globally, Washington can aim to rally a coalition intent on new and stronger punishments.

While the U.S. government cannot reveal sources and methods, it can provide detailed, unclassified briefings, perhaps by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin or Avril Haines, the director of national intelligence. Photos of Russian forces in the field and heavy equipment are worth a thousand words.

Next is cyberwarfare. The National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command are surely probing the likely command-and-control systems of a Russian invasion force. But total secrecy isn't always the best approach: Ensuring the Russians can "see" American efforts moving through that domain, without revealing everything the U.S. can and will do, should help them understand that an invasion will not be a layup. The Russians used cyberattacks very effectively in the earlier assaults on Georgia and Ukraine; they need to know that their advantage there has been blunted.

A third tool is economic. Yes, previous sanctions have not dissuaded the Russian leader. But in a two-hour discussion with Putin on Tuesday, Biden conveyed some of the "strong economic and other measures" in the event of military escalation.

These should include additional targeted steps by all Western

By **JAMES STAVRIDIS**

Bloomberg Opinion

James Stavridis is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. He is a retired U.S. Navy admiral and former supreme allied commander of NATO, and dean emeritus of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He is also chair of the board of the Rockefeller Foundation and vice chairman of Global Affairs at the Carlyle Group. His latest book is 2034: A Novel of the Next World War.



democracies against the highest members of Putin's inner circle; tighter sanctions on Russia's state-owned banks and its oil and gas sector (recognizing the difficulty of all this given the European dependence on Russian energy); and far broader secondary sanctions against companies doing business in Russia—which would begin to cut Putin off from the global economy.

Finally, the administration must consider the so-called nuclear option: disconnecting Russia from the Swift international payment system used by banks around the world, a penalty that helped devastate Iran's economy a decade ago.

In terms of aiding the Ukrainian military, the Pentagon is providing Biden with a significant menu: defensive but lethal missile systems that can stop tanks; motorized artillery and ground transports for troops; advanced drones with strike capability; basic ammunition; and other logistical support.

The Pentagon could even transfer a missile defense system to counter Russian surface-to-surface weapons. All this must be combined with sufficient U.S. trainers and strategic advisers to assist Ukrainian military planners as they assess contingencies.

Finally, Putin despises the idea of Western troops stationed close to Russia. He is seeking security guarantees, including a pledge by NATO not to enlarge eastward, as the price of de-escalation. The West shouldn't buy it: He should be told that an invasion of Ukraine would have the opposite effect, with a dramatic increase American forces in the Baltics, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. A flotilla of U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyers currently stationed in Rota, Spain, could be redeployed to Greece and begin regular operational cruises into the Black Sea.

Putin has moved beyond saber-rattling, even if the likelihood of his launching an attack before the end of the year seems relatively low. He has invaded his democratic neighbors twice in the past 13 years. Letting him get away with it again could set the international system back decades.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Q&A: COVID's evolution isn't going to stop with omicron

With the latest omicron variant of COVID-19 now identified in two dozen countries, what can we expect next from the virus that causes it? Is SARS CoV-2 any more ingenious than other viruses in developing new strains, and will we be able to keep ahead of it in the race between infection and suppression? Professor Peter White is an expert in viral evolution and leads the White Laboratory at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. He spoke to David Fickling on Dec. 1. A lightly condensed and edited transcript of the conversation follows.

David Fickling: What makes viral evolution, and broadly evolution of pandemic diseases, different from evolution elsewhere in nature? It feels like we're watching natural selection taking place in the span of days rather than millennia.

Peter White: The answer to that lies in the speed of evolution—the speed of generation of genetic diversity, or mutations, if you like. The fastest of all those are viruses. Bacteria are slower and then of course we are the slowest, and you could draw a line through the mutation rates and see the correlation: If you have a small genome like viruses, you get faster mutation. They change quickly. We don't. It will take generations, hundreds of years to change phenotypes for most mammals, but with viruses it's very quick.

DF: And the generations themselves are ridiculously short for viruses, in terms of what we think of as a generation.

PW: If an *e. coli* bacterium lands on a bit of sugar, thinks, "This is nice" and starts replicating, it goes from one cell to two, then four, eight, 16, 32 and it gets exponential. And you might think, "Wow, that's quick." But if a virus gets into a cell, it goes, "OK I'm in the cell now: One, 100,000, thank you very much, next cell." So within a few hours if you're infected by a few particles, viruses can pump out billions of copies. And that takes, for most mammal viruses, about 14 hours to 20 hours. So when you sneeze, you've got a million viruses coming out your nose. When you have diarrhea you have 10 billion viruses per gram of feces, it's like pollen. Its job is to find the next host. That's why they evolve, because if they don't, they don't exist. It's selection of the fittest.

DF: We often talk about viral evolution as something that happens between individuals in the community, but with numbers like that, presumably, there's very important selective pressures happening within the host's body. Is one of those more important than the other, and how do the two of them interact?

PW: The virus will mutate in the host's body, and then if any of those mutations are good, they'll dominate. One thing I'm expecting with coronavirus that no one's talking about is recombinants. The strain I discovered that caused the norovirus gastro pandemic in 2012 was a recombinant of two previous strains: Half of its genome was from New Orleans and half from a Dutch virus. We know that with COVID there's five variants of concern, and they're good and efficient viruses. What happens if we take the best bits from one and the best bits from another and create a hybrid? Then we're going to get a recombinant. This happens all the time, in influenza this is how we got the 1957 and 1968 pandemics. It's mutation on a big scale, swapping genomes with each other, which is much better than if they tried to do it on their own. This is what scientists will be looking out for in their genomic sequencing.

DF: We've heard a lot of people surprised at the adaptive ingenuity of COVID, with the delta and omicron variants emerging. How do you look at it?

PW: I'm not surprised. I don't think it's any more agile than

any other virus. It's doing exactly what a norovirus would do or influenza would do. Viruses will change and spread. This is exactly what happens to every virus that causes a pandemic. What about HIV? We don't really talk about that as a pandemic, though it's killed 36 million people. It is a pandemic, it's just a long one that's been going on since the 1980s, a three- or four-decade pandemic. And how did that virus come about? It was a recombinant of viruses in two smaller monkeys that a chimpanzee had hunted, which infected the chimpanzee efficiently but was also able to infect humans. And that is what led to the pandemic.

DF: Do the different interventions like vaccines, antivirals and social distancing have different effects on the selective pressures that the virus faces?

PW: Most interventions are selection pressure, and if it's a selection pressure on the genome then it will drive evolution. Let's start with the easiest one. If we make a drug against particular enzymes of the virus, then the virus will generate mutations because, if the virus doesn't mutate, the drug will kill it. So it's churning out a massive diversity of RNA sequences. The one that protects it from the drug will be selected, for that virus will come to dominate the population and all the rest will be dead, and then you have what we call a drug escape mutant or drug-resistant mutant. So that does happen, it's documented for every virus.

The other is the immune selection pressure. Everyone has been given vaccines based on the alpha strain, and we're now up to delta or worse. We know that there's 20 to 50 amino acid changes between the variants—they've made the transmission of the virus better but none have really escaped from the vaccine. So the worry we all get is, let's say 100% of the world is vaccinated against alpha and then the virus mutates. The antibodies our body has made to bind to the spike protein of alpha will no longer bind to the spike protein of the new variant, and that becomes what we call a vaccine escape mutant, and then the vaccine becomes not as good. That will happen in the future, but the boosters can easily be changed, so we should be able to stay ahead of it.

Then you have selective pressures like social distancing, and that would probably select for a more transmissible coronavirus.

DF: Some people make the argument that we're better off making more boosters available in richer countries where older populations are more at risk, rather than sending first and second doses to emerging countries with younger populations. What's your view on that, from the perspective of variant emergence?

PW: We should absolutely be doing everything we can to give the vaccine to developing countries. It's pretty clear we haven't done enough of that with South Africa at 25% double-dosed. The more we vaccinate, the more chance we have of stopping more variants from emerging. And we should be doing that anyway because it's the right thing to do. It's not that difficult and for the benefit, it's not even that expensive. It's going to be way more expensive if you don't.

DF: Most pharma companies seem pretty confident about their ability to reformulate the vaccine fairly rapidly. Can you explain why that is?

PW: Basically in the mRNA vaccine, there's only two things: a lipid nanoparticle, which contains a piece of RNA. The lipid bit's easy, they don't have to change that between variants. And then the RNA is, let's say, 2,000 nucleotides. Now with a new variant we have to change that sequence. So we change, say, 100 base pairs in that sequence, and we're just going to re-do the computer, add slightly different ingredients, and off you go. The

dence of rising prices, it could pull the plug months sooner. That in turn would set the stage for a string of interest rate hikes aimed at tamping down inflation.

For most Americans, the machinations of the Fed are one thing; the prices they pay represent something much more tangible. As Dollar Tree prepares to roll out its new \$1.25 pricing, its customers at least can look forward to some new products and sizes that deliver better value for the extra money, such as groceries and frozen foods that have gotten too

By DAVID FICKLING
Bloomberg Opinion

David Fickling is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering commodities, as well as industrial and consumer companies. He has been a reporter for Bloomberg News, Dow Jones, the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times and the Guardian.



only problem would be FDA approval, but they'll probably say yes quite quickly because it's not likely to be very different harm-wise. The delivery system and everything else are the same and it shouldn't do too much in terms of poisonous side-effects. It might do something different in terms of immune response and that's what they'll look at.

DF: You often hear a question about whether epidemic diseases naturally evolve toward milder forms that we're going to crack down on less. Is that the case?

PW: As a virus evolves with the host, does the disease lessen? And why? Most of the time the evidence is probably yes, it does. I like to use bird flu H5N1 as an example. It's got a 50% mortality rate in humans, but to get that virus you need a very high viral load. You need to be handling birds with the virus. The disadvantage for the virus in that situation is, if the virus is killing the host very quickly, it's never going to get a good chance to get into the population. What a virus wants to do is kill the host damn slowly and make tons of it before the host dies. The less obvious it is that it's causing any damage to the host, then the longer it will survive. Even so there's circumstances we've seen with rabbit viruses where if you kill quickly you'll spread better and evolve toward that form, and others where if you kill slowly you'll spread better and evolve toward that form instead.

DF: The humbling thing for us is the virus doesn't care whether we live or die. It just cares about how easy it is to reproduce. Our life or death is incidental to that!

PW: That's the only thing it exists for. There's so much of the virus produced that it will always find the best way. It's got plenty of choices.

DF: Has medical science changed the way viral evolution works, now that we do impose this new form of selective pressure that didn't exist in nature?

PW: It does change the evolution of the virus a bit. Whatever virus you look at, you get things that pop out like vaccine escapes, but it's never as bad as no vaccine. It wouldn't even put much of a dent in how well the vaccine has done in dealing with the disease. Rubella was killing 20,000 babies a year in the U.S. before that vaccine. People forget that with polio, with rubella, even in the late 1960s, people were dying massively. Then, bang, 99% of it stopped. But this is stopping people from dying, it's not stopping the spread. Given that we're only nearly two years into COVID, even the best scientists wouldn't have predicted how well, in terms of vaccines, we've responded.

DF: So your point is, we're probably not going to eradicate this, but if we can get a stalemate where it's not killing people in these numbers, that's a good endgame.

PW: This virus is always going to be with us, like influenza, and it's probably going to kill more people than influenza for quite a few more years. But the only way to get on top of that is to vaccinate.

\$1.25?

From Page 8

out Friday morning shows the trend continuing, the policymaking board will need to speed up its next move.

To boost the economic recovery from a pandemic-induced slump, the Fed had been buying \$120 billion in assets each month. In November, it started tapering its bond purchases, planning to end them entirely in mid-2022. Faced with more evi-

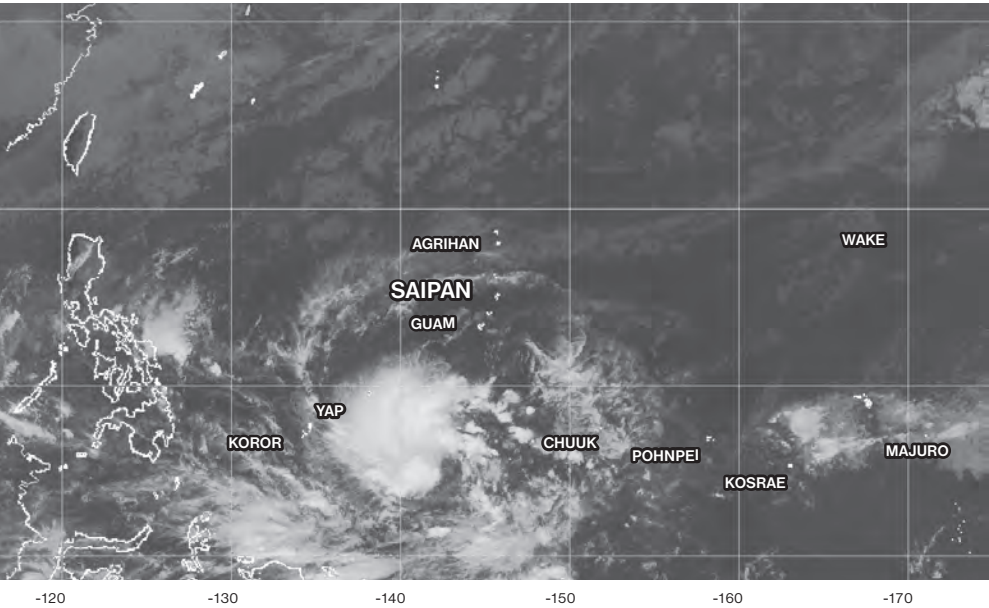
expensive for the chain to sell at \$1.

And, elsewhere at least, there's still stuff for sale at an even one dollar. Many fast-food restaurants offer \$1 (or 99-cent) options, though they've had to reboot over the years with less-costly items to keep those menus going. With a buck, you can still download a tune or game app, pick up a couple of bananas in the grocery store or buy a scratch-off lottery ticket, which in very rare cases might even resolve all the inflation concerns of its owner.

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The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.		Mostly cloudy with isolated showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	
85°	76°	87°	78°	87°	78°	87°	78°	87°	78°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 7:18 AM, MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Fresh to strong east trade winds prevail in the Marianas, bringing partly cloudy skies and isolated showers tonight. Ipan buoy indicates seas between 7 and 8 feet, with the newest altimetry pass indicating seas between 8 and 11 feet along the Marianas axis.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html>
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
 - Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
 - Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	86° / 78°	
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°	
Yap	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°	
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	85° / 77°	
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	85° / 77°	
Majuro	Thunderstorms	84° / 80°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:34 AM	5:48 PM
Wednesday	6:34 AM	5:49 PM
Thursday	6:35 AM	5:49 PM
Friday	6:36 AM	5:49 PM
Saturday	6:36 AM	5:50 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	2:18 AM	2:24 PM
Wednesday	-	3:06 AM	3:00 PM
Thursday	-	3:54 AM	3:38 PM
Friday	-	4:43 AM	4:19 PM
Saturday	-	5:34 AM	5:03 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	73° / 61°	
Beijing	Mostly Cloudy	30° / 18°	
Hong Kong	Cloudy	66° / 64°	
Honolulu	Showers	81° / 69°	
London	Mostly Sunny	34° / 34°	
Los Angeles	Sunny	83° / 49°	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 77°	
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	82° / 59°	
Miami	Mostly Sunny	74° / 54°	
New York	Showers	47° / 26°	
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	45° / 36°	
Paris	Showers	43° / 34°	
Busan	Sunny	37° / 21°	
Rome	Rain	61° / 52°	
Salem	Sunny	51° / 30°	
San Francisco	Sunny	64° / 44°	
Seoul	Sunny	27° / 9°	
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	46° / 34°	
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	47° / 23°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
5:00 AM	High Tide	1.20	
10:13 AM	Low Tide	0.66	
4:25 PM	High Tide	1.68	
11:39 PM	Low Tide	0.09	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 12, 2021

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6	UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7	UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily	UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
				UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
				UA184/174	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
				UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 6, 7 via Guam
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	6	7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	6
TW9308	3:20PM	8:00PM	4, 5	OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	6
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	6	TW9307	10:00AM	2:20PM	4, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA				ROTA TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily	3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily	3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri Daily	3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri Daily
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM		3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	
ROTA TO GUAM				GUAM TO ROTA			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable	4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable
SAIPAN TO TINIAN				TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable	2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily	2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily	2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
				2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
				2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
				2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
				2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
				2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
				2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
				2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
				2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
				2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

Inflation is painfully high, but some relief may be coming

NEW YORK (AP)—Inflation is painfully high, but this hopefully is close to as bad as it gets.

Consumer prices rose 6.8% for the 12 months ending in November, a 39-year high. Many economists expect inflation to remain near this level a few more months but to then

moderate through 2022 for a variety of reasons. And they don't see a repeat of the 1970s or early 1980s, when inflation ran above 10% for frighteningly long stretches.

Households could even see relief in some areas within weeks. Prices have dropped on global markets for crude

oil and natural gas, which is filtering into lower prices at the pump and for home heating. That should keep inflation somewhat in check, even if prices keep rising elsewhere in the economy.

To be sure, economists say inflation will likely stay higher than it was before the pandemic, even after it eases through 2022. More often than not in the last 10 years, inflation was below 2%, and it even scraped below zero during parts of 2015. The bigger danger then was too-low inflation, which can also lead to a weak economy.

"This is not going to be an easy fix," said Nela Richardson, chief economist at ADP. "Just because inflation will eventually moderate doesn't mean that prices are going to go down. They're up. We're just lowering the rate of change, not the level of prices."

Russell Price, chief econo-

mist at Ameriprise, expects inflation to peak at 7.1% in December and January, for example. After that, he expects the inflation rate to fall toward 4% by the summer and below 3% by the end of the year, but to stay above 2% through 2023.

One reason for the moderation, he said, is improving supply chains. They had become ensnared when the global economy suddenly returned to life following its brief shutdown, and economists hope increasing availability of everything from computer chips to shipping containers will help inflation to ease.

"It's in no one's interests to have the supply chain as disruptive as it has been," Price said.

Then there's the Federal Reserve. Wall Street expects the Fed to say this upcoming week that it will accelerate its exit from a monthly bond-buying program meant to support the

economy. That would open the door for it to begin raising short-term interest rates.

Both the bond buying and low rates are intended to spur borrowing, which gets people and companies to buy more things. That can help drive inflation higher, as demand outstrips supply.

The U.S. government will also potentially offer less aid to households in 2022, whether that's through child tax credit payments or beefed-up unemployment benefits. That could also lead to fewer purchases by Americans, further lessening the pressure on inflation.

Most immediately, Americans should see swings in inflation via energy costs.

A gallon of regular gasoline has fallen about 2.4% over the last month, to a little less than \$3.35 per gallon on Friday, according to AAA. That's progress, though drivers are still paying far higher prices than last year, when a gallon of

regular was only \$2.16.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration forecasts gasoline will drop again to an average of \$3.13 in December and to \$2.88 for all of 2022 after averaging \$3.39 last month, the highest since 2014.

"That should provide some relief for consumers when they go to fill up their tanks. Now how much relief? That's really hard to tell," said Andrew Gross, spokesman for AAA. "It's really hard to gauge what sort of world events are happening. And it really doesn't take much to spike oil prices."

Oil prices have dropped for a number of reasons. On one side, nations have made agreements to boost oil supplies. On the other, the omicron variant of the coronavirus dented expectations for demand on worries it would cause lockdowns and canceled travel. Benchmark U.S. crude oil has fallen nearly 15% since the start of November.

Berlin, other German states offer COVID-19 vaccine to 5-11s

VIENNA (AP)—Children from 5 to 11 years old will be eligible to begin receiving COVID-19 vaccine doses this week in Berlin, health officials said Sunday, joining other German states in opening up appointments to younger children.

The children in that age group will be able to get a first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech shot in Berlin's mass vaccination centers in schools, doctors' offices and even at the city's Natural History Museum.

The news comes days after Germany's independent vaccination advisory panel said Thursday it was recommending vaccination for children age 5 to 11 with preexisting conditions or who are in close contact with vulnerable people. Children in this age group should receive two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine

three to six weeks apart, the panel said.

The panel, known by its German acronym STIKO, added that young children without preexisting conditions can be vaccinated if there is an "individual desire" to do so—a step short of advising that all children in that age group get the shots.

Top government officials have pushed to make the vaccine available for younger children across the country.

"For many 5- to 11-year-old children and their families, this is a huge relief," incoming families minister Anne Spiegel told the Funke media group in an interview published Sunday.

Other German states, including North Rhine-Westphalia, Hamburg and Bavaria, will also make shots available to the 5-11 age group in the coming days.

France: 400 investigations into fake COVID-19 health passes

PARIS (AP)—France has opened 400 investigations into networks providing fake COVID-19 health passes, the interior minister said Sunday, as virus-related hospitalizations rise sharply across the country.

The case of a woman with the virus who died in a Paris regional hospital after showing a false vaccine certificate has drawn attention in French media in recent days. The hospital's intensive care chief said they would have given the woman immediate antibody treatment had they known that she wasn't vaccinated.

Authorities have identified several thousand fake COVID-19 health passes in use around France, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said Sunday on RTL radio. He said some 400 investigations have been opened into peddling fake passes, including some "connected to health professionals."

He didn't say how many people have been arrested so far, or provide details.

The government is tightening the rules on the passes,

required to enter all restaurants and a growing number of events and venues. To get one, people must show proof of full vaccination, a negative virus test less than 24 hours old, or recent recovery from COVID-19.

With more confirmed infections one day last week than at any point in the pandemic, France is accelerating efforts for booster shots in hopes that is enough to reduce pressure on hospitals. Half of French intensive care units are occupied by virus patients, some regions are again delaying non-urgent surgeries, and more than 100 people with the virus are dying every day.

The government closed nightclubs and tightened social distancing measures, but is trying to avoid a new lockdown. Health Minister Olivier Veran told newspaper Le Parisien that while "the epidemic wave is violent," there are signs the rise is starting to slow. He said 90% of people over 65 have had booster shots so far.

Atkins Kroll unveils all-new 2022 Lexus NX



The all-new 2022 Lexus NX is unveiled at the Lexus Grand Showcase.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

TAMUNING, Guam—The all-new 2022 Lexus NX was unveiled yesterday in the Lexus Grand Showcase. The NX is a core model for the brand and Atkins Kroll. An intimate crowd experienced the reveal of the first three NX units that arrived on island earlier this week.

Lexus brings the next chapter of the brand to life in the all-new NX featuring the debut of Lexus interface and next generation multimedia system with an expansive 14-

inch touchscreen. Wireless charging and personalized Thematic Ambient Illumination that ignites imagination is proof that a truly driver-inspired design is one that also inspires drivers. The NX does more than reimagine a luxury crossover SUV, it utterly transforms it.

The NX has been reimaged from the inside out. The front signature grille has been refined and the rear of the vehicle is dramatically redesigned. The rear

is an expression of the future of Lexus design. From the Lexus rear badge to the full-width tail lamp, the all-new NX is a new era of the Lexus brand.

Lexus Safety System comes standard and brings peace of mind to every drive. With technology that can automatically brake for oncoming cars, slow through corners and more, it's the most advanced standard safety suite ever. The new NX brings interactive tac-

tile interaction and refined functionality with its Digital Latch with Safe Exit Assist that helps ensure doors open only after checking for traffic and cyclist.

AK sales director Tom Mazzei confirmed all three units have been presold. The units include both the F-Sport NX350 and NX250. Customers are encouraged to visit akguam.com and click the Register Your Interest tab to be alerted when more units arrive. (PR)

Nation

Kentucky tornado toll in dozens; less than feared at factory

MAYFIELD, Ky. (AP)—Workers on the night shift at Mayfield Consumer Products were in the middle of the holiday rush, cranking out candles, when a tornado closed in on the factory and the word went out: “Duck and cover.”

Autumn Kirks pulled down her safety goggles and took shelter, tossing aside wax and fragrance buckets to make room. She glanced away from her boyfriend, Lannis Ward, and when she looked back, he was gone.

Gov. Andy Beshear initially said Saturday that only 40 of the 110 people working in the factory at the time were rescued, and that “it’ll be a miracle if anybody else is found alive in it.” But on Sunday, the candle company said that while eight were confirmed dead and eight remained missing, more than 90 others had been located.

Dozens of people in several Kentucky counties are still believed to have died in the storms, but Beshear, after saying Sunday morning the state’s toll could exceed 100, said that afternoon it might be as low as 50.

“We are praying that maybe original estimates of those we have lost were wrong. If so, it’s going to be pretty wonderful,” the governor said.

Kentucky was the worst-hit state by far in an unusual mid-December swarm of twisters across the Midwest and the South that leveled entire communities and left at least 14 people dead in four other states.



At the candle factory, rescuers had to crawl over the dead to get to the living at a disaster scene that smelled like scented candles.

But by the time churchgoers gathered Sunday morning to pray for the lost, more than 24 hours had elapsed since anyone had been found alive in the wreckage. Instead, crews recovered pieces of peoples’ lives—a backpack, a pair of shoes and a cellphone with 27 missed messages were among the items.

Layers of steel and cars 15 feet deep were on top of what used to be the factory roof, the governor said.

“We’re going to grieve together, we’re going to dig out

and clean up together, and we will rebuild and move forward together. We’re going to get through this,” Beshear said. “We’re going to get through this together, because that is what we do.”

Four twisters hit the state in all, including one with an extraordinarily long path of about 200 miles (322 kilometers), authorities said. The outbreak was all the more remarkable because it came at a time of year when cold weather normally limits tornadoes.

Warren County coroner Kevin Kirby said the death toll from the storms in an around Bowling Green grew by one on Sunday to 12.

“I’ve got towns that are gone, that are just, I mean gone. My dad’s hometown—

half of it isn’t standing,” Beshear said of Dawson Springs. He said that going door

Dena Ausdorn stands at the remains of her home after a tornado in Dawson Springs, Ky., Sunday, Dec. 12, 2021.

to door in search of victims is out of the question in the hardest-hit areas: “There are no doors.”

“We’re going to have over 1,000 homes that are gone, just gone,” the governor said.

With afternoon high temperatures forecast only in the 40s, tens of thousands of people were without power. About 300 National Guard members went house to house, checking on people and helping to remove debris. Cadaver dogs searched for victims.

Kirks said she and her boyfriend were about 10 feet apart in a hallway when someone said to take cover. Suddenly, she saw sky and lightning where a wall had been, and Ward had vanished.

“I remember taking my eyes off of him for a second, and then he was gone,” she said.

ACROSS THE NATION

Sheriff: 1 dead, 13 injured in shooting at vigil in Texas

One person was killed and at least 13 others were injured Sunday night in a drive-by shooting during a candlelight vigil near Houston, a sheriff said. Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez said the shooting happened around 6:40 p.m. when about 50 people were gathered for a celebration near North Market Loop in Baytown, about 25 miles west of Houston. “Right as they were releasing the balloons up into the air was when the vehicle came,” he said. “Almost at that exact time is when they opened fire into a crowd.”

One of the wounded was taken to a hospital by helicopter, Gonzalez said. One of the injured was believed to be a young child, he said. Gonzalez said it was too early to know whether the shooting may be gang-related. “Those bullets don’t have eyes or anything, so it just puts everybody at risk,” Gonzalez said. One witness, Sidney Williams, told KTRK-TV that “people were screaming and running to their cars.” (AP)

Teen accused in Michigan high school shooting due in court

OXFORD, Mich. (AP)—A 15-year-old boy accused of opening fire at his Michigan high school, killing four students and wounding seven other people, was due in court Monday for a procedural hearing. Ethan Crumbley is charged as an adult with murder, terrorism and other counts for the Nov. 30 shooting at Oxford High School, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of Detroit. The purpose of Monday’s hearing is to prepare for the next hearing, set for Dec. 20, at which a judge would hear evidence and decide whether there’s enough evidence to send Crumbley to trial. It’s possible that the case could be put on hold if his attorney seeks a mental competency exam. “In a case like Crumbley, the primary topics addressed would likely be: the exchange of discovery and the timing of that exchange; whether the preliminary examination will proceed on the scheduled date, whether it will be waived, or whether it will be adjourned to a new date; and bond,” a spokesman for the

Oakland County prosecutor’s office said.

Officials halt search for woman who went overboard on cruise

LONG BEACH, Calif. (AP)—U.S. Coast Guard authorities have halted the search for a woman who reportedly went overboard on a cruise ship near Ensenada, Mexico. Authorities searched more than 31 hours for the woman before pausing the search on Sunday pending additional information, Petty Officer First Class Adam Stanton said Sunday. The woman in her mid-20s was reported to have gone overboard early Saturday, he said. The Carnival Miracle cruise ship was returning Sunday to the port in Long Beach, where federal authorities were waiting to investigate, KABC-TV reported. Ship passenger Daniel Miranda said an announcement went out early Saturday that someone had gone overboard, and that areas of the ship were cordoned off and limited information was provided. The woman was not immediately identified. The ship left Los Angeles area on Thursday.

Paul Revere family artifacts found in attic sold for \$20K

BOSTON (AP)—Artifacts once owned by Paul Revere’s family have been sold at auction for \$20,000. The items were found in the attic of a home in Canton, Massachusetts, believed to have been owned by the family of the legendary Revolutionary War figure, The Boston Globe reports. They include tools such wrought iron calipers, letters and other personal items. There’s also an account book belonging to Paul Revere’s descendants and a sign painted black bearing the name of Paul Revere’s son, Joseph W. Revere. John McInnis Auctioneers sold the items as a single lot in an auction that concluded Saturday. The auction house estimated the lot to sell for between \$1,000 and \$2,000. The items’ historical connection helped drive up their value, John McInnis said, but he thought they would not sell for more than \$8,000. The buyer who won the auction bid online and the auction house doesn’t know their identity, he added.

Planning questions emerge at tornado-destroyed candle plant

MAYFIELD, Ky. (AP)—The Mayfield Consumer Products factory was the third-biggest employer in this corner of western Kentucky, an important economic engine that churned out candles that lined the shelves of malls around the U.S.

But why its workers kept making candles Friday night as a tornado bore down on the region remains unclear as rescuers continue scouring the factory wreckage for signs of life.

Kentucky’s governor said Sunday the ferocity of the storm was so great that there was nowhere safe to hide inside the plant.

“It appears most were sheltering in the place they were told to shelter,” Gov. Andy Beshear said. “I hope that area was as safe as it could be, but this thing got hit directly by the strongest tor-

nado we could have possibly imagined.”

A company spokesperson said Sunday that eight of the 110 workers on the overnight shift Friday are confirmed dead and another eight are missing. More than 90 have now been accounted for, making the death toll lower than some had feared hours earlier.

“Many of the employees were gathered in the tornado shelter and after the storm was over they left the plant and went to their homes,” said Bob Ferguson, the company spokesperson. “With the power out and no landline they were hard to reach initially.”

Workers said they had been told to huddle in a central hallway area, the strongest part of the building, as the storm approached. Some had already left earlier in the

night following a warning siren, they said.

The factory employs many people in and around Mayfield, a city of about 10,000 in Kentucky’s southwest corner. It is Graves County’s third-biggest employer, according to the county’s website. Even some inmates at the county jail have worked there.

Scented candles made in the plant eventually found their way onto the shelves of prominent retailers like Bath & Body Works. The Ohio retailer said in a statement it was “devastated by the horrible loss of life at the Mayfield Consumer Products factory—a long-standing partner of ours.”

The company’s founder, Mary Propes, in the mid-1990s “literally started this in her garage and it grew to one of the largest candle-makers,” Ferguson said.

Asia

North Korea's Kim at critical crossroads a decade into rule



AP

In this June 20, 2019, file photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency, visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping, left, and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un wave from an open top limousine as they travel along a street in Pyongyang, North Korea.

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Too young. Too weak. Too inexperienced.

Since taking power following his father's sudden death 10 years ago, Kim Jong Un has erased the widespread doubts that greeted his early attempts to extend his family's brutal dynastic grip over North Korea.

Early predictions about a regency, a collective leadership or a military coup were crushed by an estimated hundreds of executions and purges targeting family members and the old guard. That ruthless consolidation of power, together with a larger-than-life personality seemingly made for carefully packaged TV propaganda, has allowed Kim to make clear that his authority is absolute.

But as North Korea's first millennial dictator marks a decade in rule this Friday, he may be facing his toughest moment yet, as crushing sanctions, the pandemic and growing economic trouble converge. If Kim can't uphold his public pledge to develop both nukes and his moribund economy, something many experts see as impossible, it could spell trouble for his long-term rule.

The modest economic growth he achieved for several years through trade and market-oriented reforms was followed by a tightening of international sanctions since 2016, when Kim accelerated his pursuit of nuclear weapons and missiles targeting the United States and its Asian allies.

After basking in the global spotlight at summits with former U.S. President Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019, Kim

is now stuck at home, grappling with a decaying economy worsened by pandemic-related border closures.

Negotiations with Washington have been deadlocked for more than two years after he failed to win badly needed sanctions relief from Trump. President Joe Biden's administration seems in no hurry to cut a deal unless Kim shows a willingness to wind down his nuclear weapons program, a "treasured sword" he sees as his biggest guarantee of survival.

While still firmly in control, Kim appears increasingly unlikely to achieve his stated goals of simultaneously keeping his nukes and bringing prosperity to his impoverished populace. Kim laid out this goal in his first public speech as leader in early 2012, vowing that North Koreans would "never have to tighten their belts again."

How Kim handles the economy in the coming years could determine the long-term stability of his rule and possibly the future of his family's dynasty, said Park Won Gon, a professor of North Korea studies at Seoul's Ewha Womans University.

"The nuclear weapons program, the economy and the stability of the regime are all interconnected. If the nuclear issue doesn't get resolved, the economy doesn't get better, and that opens the possibility of disquiet and confusion in North Korea's society," Park said.

Kim desperately needs the removal of U.S.-led sanctions to build his economy, which has also been damaged by decades of mismanagement and

aggressive military spending.

But meaningful U.S. relief may not come unless Kim takes concrete steps toward denuclearization. Despite his pursuit of summitry, Trump showed no interest in budging on sanctions, which he described as Washington's main leverage over Pyongyang, and it's unclear if Kim will ever see another U.S. president as willing to engage with the North as Trump was.

Their diplomacy fell apart after their second summit in February 2019, when the Americans rejected North Korea's demand for a major removal of sanctions in exchange for dismantling an aging nuclear facility, which would have amounted to a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

The two sides haven't met publicly since a failed follow-up meeting between working-level officials in October of that year. Two months after that Kim vowed at a domestic political conference to further expand his nuclear arsenal in the face of "gangster-like" U.S. pressure, urging his people to stay resilient in the struggle for economic self-reliance.

But the global COVID-19 crisis has hampered some of Kim's major economic goals by forcing the country into a self-imposed lockdown that crippled its trade with China, its only major ally and economic lifeline.

South Korea's spy agency recently told lawmakers that North Korea's annual trade with China declined by two-thirds to \$185 million through September 2021.

World

Johnson: UK faces 'tidal wave' of omicron cases

LONDON (AP)—Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned Sunday that Britain faces a "tidal wave" of infections from the omicron coronavirus variant, and announced a huge increase in booster vaccinations to strengthen defenses against it.

In a televised statement, Johnson said everyone age 18 and older will be offered a third shot of vaccine by the end of this month in response to the omicron "emergency." The previous target was the end of January.

He said cases of the highly transmissible variant are doubling every two to three days in Britain, and "there is a tidal wave of omicron coming."

"And I'm afraid it is now clear that two doses of vaccine are simply not enough to give the level of protection we all need," Johnson said. "But the good news is that our scientists are confident that with a third dose — a booster dose — we can all bring our level of

protection back up."

He announced a "national mission" to deliver booster vaccines, with pop-up vaccination centers and seven-day-a-week getting extra support from teams of military planners and thousands of volunteer vaccinators.

Johnson's Dec. 31 target applies to England. The other parts of the U.K.—Scotland,

Wales and Northern Ireland—are also expected to speed up their vaccination campaigns.

The U.K. Health Security Agency says existing vaccines appear less effective in preventing symp-

tomatic infections in people exposed to omicron, though preliminary data show that effectiveness appears to rise to between 70% and 75% after a third vaccine dose.

More than 80% of people age 12 and up in Britain have received two doses of vaccine, and 40% of adults have had three doses. Giving the rest a booster in the next three weeks will be a huge challenge, requiring almost 1 million doses delivered a day.

Johnson acknowledged that many routine medical procedures would have to be postponed to meet the goal.

Johnson's announcement came hours after the government raised the country's official coronavirus threat level, warning the rapid spread of the omicron variant had pushed the U.K. into risky territory.

The chief medical officers of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland said the 10f the highly transmissible new strain "adds additional and rapidly increasing risk to the public and health care services" at a time when COVID-19 is already widespread. They recommended raising the alert level from 3 to 4 on a 5-point scale. The top level, 5, indicates authorities think the health care system is about to be overwhelmed.

The doctors said early evidence shows omicron is spreading much faster than the currently dominant delta variant, and that vaccines offer less protection against it. British officials say omicron is likely to replace delta as the dominant strain in the U.K. within days.

WORLD BRIEFS

Satellite images, expert suggest Iranian space launch coming

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Iran appears to be preparing for a space launch as negotiations continue in Vienna over its tattered nuclear deal with world powers, according to an expert and satellite images. The likely blast off at Iran's Imam Khomeini Spaceport comes as Iranian state media has offered a list of upcoming planned satellite launches in the works for the Islamic Republic's civilian space program, which has been beset by a series of failed launches. Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard runs its own parallel program that successfully put a satellite into orbit last year. Conducting a launch amid the Vienna talks fits the hard-line posture struck by Tehran's negotiators, who already described six previous rounds of diplomacy as a "draft," exasperating Western nations. Germany's new foreign minister has gone as far as to warn that "time is running out for us at this point."

2 Palestinians killed during funeral in Lebanon refugee camp

BEIRUT (AP)—Gunfire erupted Sunday during a Hamas-organized funeral in a tense Palestinian refugee camp, leaving at least two people dead and seven injured, officials said. Lebanon's National News Agency said the gunfire was sparked by an altercation during the funeral. But Hamas spokesperson Ayman Shanaa told Palestinian media that gunmen opened fire at the mourners and put the death toll at four. The Hamas member buried Sun-

day had died under disputed circumstances late Friday when the tense Burj Shamali was rocked by a series of explosions. The Palestinian Hamas group said an electrical short-circuit in a storage area for oxygen bottles caused the blast. A Lebanese security official said the explosion happened in an ammunition depot, however. NNA had also reported an explosion in a Hamas arms warehouse in the camp, saying a number were killed and injured.

South African president tests positive for COVID, mildly ill

JOHANNESBURG (AP)—South African President Cyril Ramaphosa is receiving treatment for mild COVID-19 symptoms after testing positive for the disease Sunday, his office said. Ramaphosa started feeling unwell and a test confirmed COVID-19, a statement from the presidency announced. He is self-isolating in Cape Town and is being monitored by the South African Military Health Service, the statement said. He has delegated all responsibilities to Deputy President David Mabuza for the next week. Ramaphosa, 69, is fully vaccinated. The statement didn't say whether he had been infected with the omicron coronavirus variant. Last week, Ramaphosa visited four West African countries. He and all members of his delegation were tested for COVID-19 in each of the countries during the trip. Some in the delegation tested positive in Nigeria and returned directly to South Africa. Throughout the rest of the trip, Ramaphosa and his delegation tested negative. Ramaphosa returned from Senegal on Dec. 8.

Overdrive



Tesla Plaid pushes the limits of speed and tech

Despite wintry conditions, the 2022 Tesla Model S Plaid proved balanced on M1's race course.

HENRY PAYNE/THE DETROIT NEWS/TNS

By HENRY PAYNE
THE DETROIT NEWS

When Spaceballs One hits Plaid speed in Mel Brooks' classic "Star Wars" spoof, the space ship shakes like a tin can, the engines scream, the crew cowers, and the evil Dark Helmet (played by the incomparable Rick Moranis in a send-up of Darth Vader) yells: "What have I done? My brains are going into my feet!"

The 2022 Tesla Model S Plaid isn't quite so harrowing. Though I think my brains did bounce off the back of my skull.

I took the Plaid out onto M1 Concourse's Champion Motor Speedway this week to experience the world's new standard for speed. Zero-60 mph in sub-two seconds, 1,020 horsepower, 9.23-second quarter mile at (cough) 156 mph. For comparison, the fastest gas-powered car, the supercharged, 840-horse Dodge Challenger SRT Demon, hits 60 in 2.3 seconds—and the quarter in 9.65. In cold, 30-degree temps on a damp December track, I couldn't match Tesla's claimed 1.99-second 0-60 sprint, achieved in optimal California conditions.

But I did manage a series of 2 1/2 -second, launch-controlled, 0-60 runs that were a serenely violent experience.

Set Launch Control by matting the brake and accelerator pedals with (respectively) your left and right feet. Release the brake. Holy Mother of Mercy.

The Model S Plaid briefly recoiled as if it been hit by a bolt of lightning. The instrument display lit up with Spaceballs-like orange Plaid graphics. Then the Tesla exploded forward, the tri-motors' instant, 1,050 pound-feet-of-electric-torque silently crushing my spine into the seatback. According to the data crunchers at Motor Trend, Plaid generates 1.00 g-load at launch, peaking at 1.23-g at 32 mph.

Sixty mph blew by in a snap, but Plaid didn't stop there, hitting 120 mph in about seven seconds—or about the time it takes a Nissan Leaf EV to hit 60.

"Just stop this thing! I order

NUTS & BOLTS

- **Vehicle type:** Battery-powered, all-wheel-drive, five-passenger sedan
- **Price:** \$134,490 including \$1,200 destination fee (\$99,490 for base Model S)
- **Powerplant:** 98 kWh lithium-ion battery with three-electric-motor drive
- **Power:** 1,020 horsepower, 1,050 pound-feet torque
- **Transmission:** Single-speed direct drive
- **Performance:** 0-60 mph, 1.99 seconds (mfr.), 2.07 seconds (Motor Trend); top speed, 200 mph
- **Weight:** 4,766 pounds
- **Range:** 348-396 miles (depending on wheel selection)
- **Report card**
- **Highs:** Rocket-ship acceleration; sci-fi interior tech
- **Lows:** Clumsy turn signal buttons on steering wheel; phantom braking in Autopilot
- **Overall:** 4 stars

you! Stoooooop!" yells Spaceballs' Dark Helmet as he holds on for dear life.

But as the end of M1's back straight rushed up, I simply hit the Plaid's big brakes and the sedan rotated beautifully into the long, 150-degree Turn 7 sweeper. Another data point? Plaid not only shattered Motor Trend's acceleration records, it went from 0-to-100-and-back-to-0 again in 8.2 seconds, beating the McLaren Senna supercar by 0.3 seconds.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk is obviously a Spaceballs fan and Plaid has always been the goal of the Tesla's flagship Model S. But Model S's performance long ago reset expectations for EVs.

In 2012, the standard, \$70K Model S wowed with 5.1-second 0-60 acceleration and 240-mile range. The Silicon Valley automaker relentlessly improved the formula, introducing more capable, more costly all-wheel-drive models. In 2015, Tesla dropped the Model S P90D with Ludicrous mode—a reference, natch, to the speed Spaceballs One hits before Plaid.

I tested Ludicrous six years ago and it made me light-headed, so instant was the torque. It was a Cedar Point roller-coaster ride, and you could do it over

and over and over. Zero-60? 2.8 seconds. Now comes Plaid—nearly 30% quicker.

Credit those three carbon-sleeved motors driving the wheels (up from two), more efficient battery pack and fatter 9.5/10.5-inch tires front/rear under enlarged fenders.

But Tesla has always been about much more than straight-line speed. Musk and his elves are about rethinking the automobile (no coincidence Model S badging echoes the revolutionary Ford Model T of a century ago). And legacy automakers are paying attention.

Tesla also captured the popular imagination with its iPhone-simple interior—17-inch screen, over-the-air updates, Autopilot driver-assist capability.

Desperate to catch the American car company that has been eating their lunch the last decade (something Detroit premium makers struggled to do), German makers have brought out the big guns with EVs like the Porsche Taycan, Mercedes EQS and Audi e-tron GT.

Your move, Tesla. If Model S's exterior plays it safe (subtle changes include front/rear face tucks and rear Plaid badge), the interior does anything but. Where brand halos usually set the lineup's tone, Model S takes its design cues from its popular Model 3 junior sibling.

The signature 17-inch center screen has been flipped to landscape mode against a simple horizontal dash (secluded air vents and all) like the Model 3 I've owned for three years. Unlike 3, S still features an instrument display, now more subtly integrated into the dash.

What's really daring in the 2022 Model S is the yoke steering wheel.

Obsessive about pushing the envelope, Tesla has adopted a wheel more common to game consoles and Formula One Racing. Dude, round is sooo 15 minutes ago.

The design improves instrument-display visibility (see that Plaid light show) and is easy to use on track. But it takes getting used-to around parking lots and

other tight turns typically negotiated by rotating the wheel hand-over-hand. I found myself learning one-handed driving in tight situations like a baton twirler. If Tesla introduced one-pedal regenerative driving, why not one-hand steering?

The Model 3's clever, multi-functional scroll orbs are now the heart of the Model S yoke. But Musk & Co. continue to push boundaries by striking the shift and turn signal stalks. Shifting between park, drive and reverse is now done by a screen slider, turn signals by wheel-based buttons. The latter can be maddening.

Cruising along I-75, I actuated Navigate on Autopilot with a simple press of the scroll orb—then automatically changed lanes with the turn-signal button.

At the limits, no one can compete with the Porsche Taycan for handling talent, but Plaid makes a good effort with its state-of-the-art adaptive suspension. In COMFORT mode, I floated above Detroit's pocked streets. In PLAID mode, the Model S crouched low—hugging M1 Concourse's turns despite wintry conditions.

Overcooking it into Turn 9, I caught the Plaid's rear end easily, the car's electronics helping herd its 4,677-pound girth back into line.

The first significant makeover of the Model S in a decade, Plaid once more raises the bar for luxury performance. With its unmatched Supercharger network, shocking speed, predictable handling and leading-edge tech, it's the most ambitious sedan in the world. No doubt, its price is only attainable to a few. But at \$134,490, it is not only \$50,000 cheaper than the comparable Porsche Taycan or Merc EQS, it's \$5K less than the P90D I drove in 2015.

Tesla has gone Plaid, and the competition is still catching up.

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MOTORMOUTH

By BOB WEBER

Tribune News Service



Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. He maintains this status by seeking certification every five years. Weber's work appears in professional trade magazines and other consumer publications. His writing also appears in automotive trade publications, Consumer Guide and Consumers Digest. Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.

Bonding over car talk

Q I have an Uncle Allen in DeKalb, Illinois, in his early 90s, who reads your column in the Chicago Tribune. The unknown benefit of your column is that Allen not only reads the articles, but he cuts them out and sends them to me. We have a standing call every Wednesday night and many times your article is discussed. It brings up some type of question he has regarding your article. I am a retired engineer and find your articles interesting and humorous. We have not been face-to-face for two years now, so it's one way we keep our minds working. Thanks and please continue with your informative articles.

A I am accustomed to dealing with things mechanical, but your message revved up my soft subsystem. In this holiday season, I wish you and all my readers peace and happy motoring. Thanks.

Q Can you recommend a particular brand or style of tire gauge that you feel is the most reliable and accurate? It seems that almost all of the ones I have owned have not worked that well. I have only owned the pencil-style ones. Are the digital style gauges worth the extra money?

A Tire pressure is a squishy subject. You want to have the correct pressure, but it need not be correct to a tenth of a psi. I have used, and continue to use, pencil gauges. I also have dial gauges and digital gauges. When I compare readings among them, they are pretty close. Digital gauges' accuracy is, however, the most consistent over the life of the gauge. The only place I know of where guys become inflation fanatics is the drag strip.

Q Like many people this time of year, I have some small engine gasoline mix (40:1 or 50:1) left in a gas can. I use 89 octane for the mix. Can I add the leftover mixed gas to my 4-cylinder car when it has about three-quarters of a tank of regular 87 octane? Will the mixed gas cause any problems?

A Just like I can count on the days getting too cold to mow the lawn, I can count on getting this question from readers. Yes, you can put that leftover gas in the tank when you're at the gas station and then top off the tank. Alternatively, you can add some Sta-Bil to the gas can and save it for next spring. Tip: Put some Sta-Bil in the mower's tank and run the engine for a couple minutes. That will distribute it through the carb and it will start easier next season.

Q I am a 70-year-old lady who just purchased a 2007 Corvette. (What was I thinking, right?) I will store it in the garage for the winter months and have the following questions: Should I put an additive into the gas tank? Should I add extra air to the tires? In the past I have plugged the trickle charger into the outlet in the center console rather than onto the battery and the car has started all right come spring. Is this OK?

A Wow, a gas question, then a tire question and now a combination of the two. Is that a hat trick? Yes, put some Sta-Bil in the gas and bring the cold tire pressure up and add a couple psi. Replace your trickle charger with a smart charger that floats the charge that won't harm the battery. Until last year, my 92-year-old mom had a Z06 Vette in her garage. Granted, it was the neighbor's, but she looked way cool standing next to it.

Life & Style

Miss Universe is India's Harnaaz Sandhu, 70th winner

By **ARIEL SCHALIT**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

EILAT, Israel (AP) — Harnaaz Sandhu of India was crowned the 70th Miss Universe on Sunday, topping a field of some 80 contestants in a pageant that was touched by politics and the pandemic.

The previously reigning Miss Universe, Andrea Meza of Mexico, crowned her successor, a Bollywood actress, in the Israeli Red Sea resort town of Eilat. The pageant was held in the middle of the night, wrapping up at 5 a.m. local time (10 p.m. EST) to accommodate the primetime schedule in the U.S.

The pageant included traditional displays of national costumes, swimwear and a se-

ries of interview questions to test contestants' public speaking skills. The top 10 showed off intricately bedazzled full-length gowns in either gold, silver or bronze. The Philippines' Beatrice Luigi Gomez wore an asymmetrical cut dress with one sleeve, highlighting a new tattoo she said "celebrates her womanhood."

But the contest also drew attention in recent weeks for other reasons.

A grassroots Palestinian-led boycott had urged contestants to skip the event to protest Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

In the end, only Malaysia, a predominantly Muslim country with close ties to the Palestinians, did not send a representative, citing the glob-



India's Harnaaz Sandhu waves after being crowned Miss Universe 2021 during the 70th Miss Universe pageant, Monday, Dec. 13, 2021, in Eilat, Israel. **AP**

al COVID-19 situation. The South African government, which also strongly supports the Palestinian cause, withdrew support for the country's representative over her participation.

In an interview last month, Meza urged contestants to leave politics out of the pageant, saying the gathering was meant to bring together women from different backgrounds. "When you are in there you forget about politics, about your religion," she told The Associated Press at the time.

Sara Salansky, an official with the Israeli Tourism Ministry, said the country was selected to host the contest earlier this year because of Israel's successful coronavirus vaccination program.

Spielberg 'West Side Story' debuts weakly with \$10.5M

NEW YORK (AP)—Despite critical acclaim and two years-worth of anticipation, Steven Spielberg's lavish "West Side Story" revival made little noise at the box office, debuting with \$10.5 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday—a worrisome result for a movie industry struggling to recapture its finger-snapping rhythm.

A dazzling widescreen adaptation and Spielberg's first musical, "West Side Story" was one of the year's most eagerly awaited titles. With a script by Tony Kushner and Rita Moreno returning to her breakthrough film 60 years later, the \$100-million "West Side Story" epitomizes a grand-scale prestige film that Hollywood infrequently produces anymore. It hit the-

aters on a wave of glowing reviews and expectations that it could play a starring role in March's Academy Awards.

But "West Side Story" faced a challenging marketplace for both adult-driven releases and musicals. Audiences have steadily returned to multiplexes in the second year of the pandemic, but older moviegoers, who made up the bulk of ticket-buyers for Spielberg's latest, have been among the slowest to return.

Musicals, too, have struggled to catch on in theaters. Lin-Manuel Miranda's "In the Heights" launched with \$11 million in June but the Warner Bros. release simultaneously streamed on HBO Max. The critically panned "Dear Evan Hansen," from Universal, debuted with \$7.4 million in September.

Anne Rice, who breathed new life into vampires, dies at 80

NEW YORK (AP)—Anne Rice, the novelist whose lush, best-selling gothic tales, including "Interview With a Vampire," reinvented the blood-drinking immortals as tragic antiheroes, has died. She was 80.

Rice died late Saturday due to complications from a stroke, her son Christopher Rice announced on her Facebook page and his Twitter page.

"As a writer, she taught me to defy genre boundaries and surrender to my obsessive passions," Christopher Rice, also an author, wrote. "In her final hours, I sat beside her hospital bed in awe of her accomplishments and her courage."

Rice's 1976 novel "Interview With the Vampire" was later adapted, with a script by Rice, into the 1994 movie directed by Neil Jordan and starring Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt. It's also set to be adapted

again in an upcoming TV series on AMC and AMC+ set to premiere next year.

"Interview With the Vampire," in which reporter Daniel Molloy interviews Louis de Pointe du Lac, was Rice's first novel but over the next five decades, she would write more than 30 books and sell more than 150 million copies worldwide. Thirteen of those were part of the "Vampire Chronicles" begun with her 1976 debut. Long before "Twilight" or "True Blood," Rice introduced sumptuous romance, female sexuality and queerness—many took "Interview With the Vampire" as an allegory for homosexuality—to the supernatural genre.

"I wrote novels about people who are shut out life for various reasons," Rice wrote in her 2008 memoir "Called

Out of Darkness: A Spiritual Confession." "This became a great theme of my novels—how one suffers as an outcast, how one is shut out of various levels of meaning and, ultimately, out of human life itself."

Born Howard Allen Frances O'Brien in 1941, she was raised in New Orleans, where many of her novels were set. Her father worked for the postal service but made sculptures and wrote fiction on the side. Her older sister, Alice Borchardt, also wrote fantasy and horror fiction. Rice's mother died when Rice was 15.

Raised in an Irish Catholic family, Rice initially imagined herself becoming a priest (before she realized women weren't allowed) or a nun. Rice often wrote about her fluctuating spiritual journey.



Rice

Wife's outdoor activities exclude disabled husband

DEAR ABBY: My husband is in his 40s and permanently disabled from injuries received in a recent automobile accident. He is in pain, on pain medicine 24 hours a day and basically sleeps his days away. His pain and immobility make intimacy impossible.

He doesn't object when I go out with friends or participate in activities he is unable to do, like hiking, biking or kayaking, yet I feel guilty for leaving him home alone five days a week, and sometimes the entire weekend. His mother thinks I'm a terrible person for doing this, but I can't just sit home with him after I get home from work because he falls asleep watching TV.

We both know this will be the situation for the rest of our lives. This self-care is very important to my physical and mental well-being, as the financial stress is also overwhelming. How do I continue to live an active life and still be the wife he needs?

SAD FATE IN PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR SAD FATE: If the situation were reversed, is this the way you would like your husband to treat you? This is an honest discussion you should be having with him. I will be frank. Leaving a disabled spouse five days (nights?) a week or for an entire weekend on a regular basis seems excessive.

You promised to love, honor and cherish this man in sickness and in health. Would it be possible to include him on an occasional outing—if he can handle it—so he can have some fresh air and a change of scenery? If you must go out to preserve your sanity, it would be compassionate to arrange for someone to stay with him so he's not alone in case there is some kind of emergency.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I'm a woman of 28. I have started falling in love with a girl I met recently. We talked for a while, expressed feelings for each other and decided to start dating. She lives in Minnesota and I'm in Texas. She's also in college. I think she's 18 or 19. I know our age span is a little wide, but we didn't care about that.

Things were going OK, but recently she's gone quiet and hasn't been talking to me as often. She said she just needs some time to herself and that she's having some second thoughts about all of this. I talked with her about it, and she told me she still loves me and wants me to come visit her, which I'm planning to do soon. It feels like she's got cold feet, and I'm not sure what to do. I love her. I want to make this work between us, but I feel unwanted and unloved. What should I do?

STARTING TO LOSE FAITH

DEAR ABBY

By **ABIGAIL VAN BUREN**
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

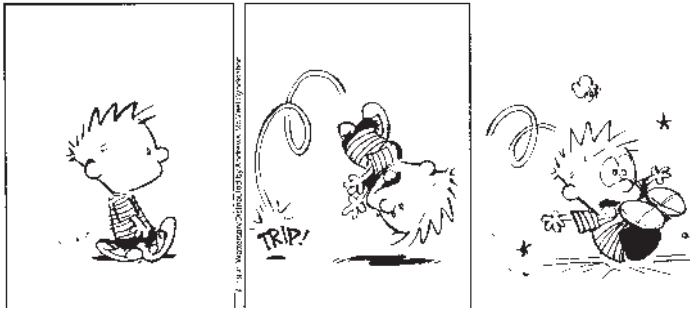


DEAR STARTING: What you should do is recognize that you and this young woman are in very different places in your lives. You are ready for a serious commitment to someone. She's a college student who isn't yet out of her teens. If she needs time to herself so she can figure out whether she is ready for the kind of relationship you have in mind, give it to her. Do not force it. If that means postponing your visit, so be it.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable—and most frequently requested—poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes



By Bill Waterson



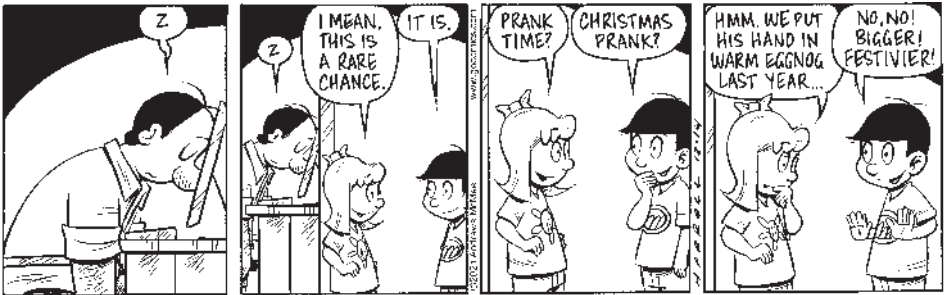
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Stuff like pensers 37 Begrimed 5 Moment 38 "Bodak Yellow" rapper 8 LAPD alerts 41 Delty 12 On the briny 42 Noggin 13 Sly chuckle 43 Terrier type 14 Furnace 48 A Great 15 Revealing Lake 17 Move, in Realtor 49 Marseilles monarch 18 Label 50 Air-show 19 Rent stunt 51 Crease 21 Bo Peep's line 24 Spring queen 25 Lusty Fitzgerald 26 Church fundraiser 52 Bottom 30 Scull need 53 Scat 31 Kind of wrench 32 Passing craze 33 Malty beer 35 Incursion

DOWN 1 Perched 2 Work with 3 Animation frame 4 Summer top 5 Carpet type 6 Sushi choice 7 Iroquoian language 8 Spanning 9 Work by Maya Angelou 10 Indo-nesian island 11 — gin fizz 16 Spigot 20 Warning sign 21 No neatnik 22 Get wind of 23 Architect Saanen 24 Shopping havens 26 Eateries with steamers 27 Miles away 28 Cannes milk 29 Whirlpool 31 Con 34 Rolled into a ball 35 Brain-teaser 37 Fawn's mama 38 Food Network star 39 Saab model 40 Banister 41 Bleak 44 Chit 45 Pioneer-ing ISP 46 Online guffaw 47 Ecol. watchdog

Solution time: 22 mins.

Y A K R A D I T I P
U S F F N A C U K F
K I N G J A M E S D E E
C O U I R E J O A K
Z O M B I E S L U R
U T A N I T F A K E R
C O M P M I D L I V E
K E B A B L A W N I N
O P A L M A N G L E
A N K A R A A R P
M G I K I N G C R A B S
P L N I N N E R X I I
M E G N E W S Y E N D

Yesterday's answer 12-14

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Vanessa Hudgens, 33; Sophie Monk, 42; Beth Orton, 51; Dee Wallace, 73.

Happy Birthday: A liberated attitude will help you prepare for unexpected changes this year. Rise to all occasions, and display your ability to adjust. Use your resources to overcome any obstacle and turn it into an opportunity. Rely on your intuition, not what someone tells you. Think and do for yourself. Honesty is the quickest path to peace of mind. Your numbers are 9, 17, 22, 24, 37, 41, 46.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Don't give in or give up. Anger will make you look bad. Pour your energy into something worthwhile. Focus on what you want to do and how you can turn it into a lucrative goal. Baby steps will help you reach your destination. ***

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Inconsistency will rear its ugly head if you are gullible or lack initiative. Think matters through, budget wisely and don't let outsiders interfere with your plans. The road to success requires patience, insight and trust in your ability to succeed. ***

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Be careful what you say and do. Someone in a position of power can make or break your plans. Choose your words carefully, and execute your plans with precision. A perfect launch will carry weight and lead to success. ***

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Call those you know and trust to do as you ask. Set a goal, and relay your message with precision. You stand to gain mentally, physically and financially if you are direct and take control. Romance is favored. ****

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Emotions will stand between you and what you want. If you overreact, take on too much or let someone steal your thunder, you will backpedal your way to the starting line. Put your feelings aside and be practical. **

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): It's up to you to make things happen. Don't wait for someone to make the first move. Wasted time will lead to disappointment, regret and anger. There is nothing you can't achieve if you concentrate on what's important to you. *****

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Pay attention to personal matters instead of getting involved in what's happening to others. A steady pace will lead to the perks you want and the chance to meet people heading down a similar path. ***

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): You can take control of any situation you encounter if you speak from the heart. An energetic approach will help you build a better life. Let go of the past, and move forward with the momentum to finish what you start. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Keep your personal and professional lives separate. Indulgent behavior will make you look bad. Don't share too much information with your peers, relatives or lover. An emotional response will leave you in a vulnerable position. Don't limit what you can achieve. ***

EUGENIA LAST
THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY
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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Embrace change, and make it work for you. Invest time and effort into how you live and making your domestic situation better. An open discussion will lead to positive change. Honesty is the best policy, and romance will enhance your life. *****

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Be observant, but don't interfere. Pushing your beliefs or thoughts on others will backfire. Diplomacy will allow you to maintain your status quo without being blamed for what occurs. Do what you can without ultimatums. Put your energy into professional gains. **

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Don't get angry; get moving. Take the initiative and make things happen. A change in how you approach your livelihood will make a difference in the way others treat you. Be smart and use your skills, and you will excel. ****

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, unpredictable and questioning. You are passionate and generous. * Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ** You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. *** Focus and you'll reach your goals. **** Aim high; start new projects. ***** Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

9 8 1 4
7 9
5 2 7
4 5 9
8 2 4 6 3
1 5 6
2 3 7 9

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

2 3 1 9 6 5 7 4 8
8 6 5 4 7 3 9 2 1
9 4 7 8 2 1 5 6 3
7 5 2 6 4 8 1 3 9
1 8 4 3 5 9 6 7 2
6 9 3 2 1 7 8 5 4
4 2 8 5 9 6 3 1 7
3 1 6 7 8 2 4 9 5
5 7 9 1 3 4 2 8 6

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99c per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

Difficulty Level ★★ 12/14
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WONDERWORD® By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS Solution: 7 letters

Y R E L T U C I N A G R O N H
P E L S H O W E R S A F E T Y
L T A I M F A B R I C D N C E
A A C P O S L I O L R O L B L
N W O O D S K H O A I O P I I
E S L A N D T O G T T L L K G
T C E T O R P R I H A L A E H
N S O L A R P S A E T I N L T
A C E E A C O N L G I M T D S
R I L C E P D B C R B D S N L
O M C R M M A O E E A N G A E
D A Y O A S T T A E H I A C N
O R C D U T L T L N T W B H A
E E E E O I G L A S S G U M P
D C R N F I B E R E D U C E Y

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Bags, Bike, Bottle, Candle, Carpool, Ceramic, Cloth, Compost, Cotton, Cutlery, Decomposition, Deodorant, Earth, Fabric, Fiber, Filter, Garden, Glass, Green, Grocery, Habitat, Handmade, Land, Lights, Local, Mugs, Oils, Organic, Panels, Planet, Plants, Protect, Recycle, Reduce, Reusable, Safety, Shower, Soil, Solar, Walk, Water, Windmill, Wood
Yesterday's Answer: Jelly Beans
To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 45 through 62 order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Brady sets completions record, throws 700th TD in OT win

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Tom Brady became the NFL's all-time completions leader and threw his 700th touchdown pass for the winning score as the defending Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay Buccaneers got a 33-27 overtime victory over the Buffalo Bills on Sunday.

Brady threw for 363 yards and two touchdowns, and scored on a quarterback sneak set up by the 7,143rd completion of an unmatched 22-year career that includes seven Super Bowl titles.

Tampa Bay won it on Breshad Perriman's 58-yard catch-and-run with 5:31 left in OT—the 700th TD pass of Brady's career, including playoffs.

Despite blowing a 21-point halftime lead, the Bucs (10-3) won their fourth straight game and moved closer to clinching Tampa Bay's first NFC South title since 2007.

Brady, who ruled Buffalo and won 17 AFC East titles during a two-decade stint with the New England Patriots, improved to 33-3 in career starts against the Bills. He broke Drew Brees' record for most completions in a career late in the second quarter and finished 31 of 46 with no interceptions.

Josh Allen shrugged off a slow start to throw for 308 yards and two touchdowns for Buffalo (7-6). He also rushed for 109 yards and a TD, becoming the fourth player in league history to throw for over 300 yards and also rush for 100-plus in the same game.

Packers 45, Bears 30

In Green Bay, Wis., Aaron Rodgers threw for 341 yards and four touchdowns to continue his mastery of the NFL's oldest rivalry as Green Bay beat Chicago.

The Packers scored the first 24 points of the second half to erase a 27-21 halftime deficit.

Green Bay (10-3) took a four-game lead over the Minnesota Vikings in the NFC North and moved closer to its third straight division title. Chicago (4-9) has lost seven of eight.

Rodgers went 29 of 37, throwing two TD passes to Davante Adams and one each to Allen Lazard and Aaron Jones. Rodgers has 61 career touchdown passes against the Bears, the most all-time against Chicago and one more than his predecessor, Brett Favre.

Chiefs 48, Raiders 7

In Kansas City, Mo., Patrick Mahomes threw his first two touchdown passes in nearly a month, Clyde Edwards-Helaire added two more scores on the ground, and the Chiefs forced five turnovers in rolling to a record-setting victory over the Raiders.



Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady (12) celebrates as he leaves the field after the team defeated the Buffalo Bills during overtime of an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 12, 2021, in Tampa, Fla. AP

Derek Gore's 51-yard TD run with 7:19 left in the fourth quarter allowed Kansas City (9-4) to eclipse the largest margin of victory in a series that began in 1960 and has been played 126 times. The previous record was 35 points in 1964.

Tyrann Mathieu had an interception and fumble recovery, Mike Hughes returned another fumble 23 yards for a touchdown, and the reigning AFC champion Chiefs built a 35-0 first-half lead before cruising to their sixth consecutive win.

49ers 26, Bengals 23, OT

In Cincinnati, Jimmy Garoppolo threw a 12-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Aiyuk to win it after San Francisco blew a big lead.

Garoppolo completed five passes in the overtime drive, including a pair to tight end George Kittle, who was again San Francisco's offensive star. On the final play, Aiyuk dived to the pylon and was initially ruled short, but a replay gave him the touchdown and San Francisco (7-6) a critical win.

Evan McPherson hit a 41-yard field goal in the opening possession of overtime to give the Bengals (7-6) a brief lead, their first of the day.

San Francisco's Robbie Gould missed a 47-yard field goal with 4 seconds left in regulation that would have won it. That came after Cincinnati quarterback Joe Burrow found Ja'Marr Chase for two fourth-quarter touchdowns to claw back from a 20-6 deficit and tie the game with 1:19 left.

Browns 24, Ravens 22

In Cleveland, Baker Mayfield threw two touchdown passes, Myles Garrett scored his first career TD and the Browns

stayed in the thick of the playoff race.

The Ravens lost quarterback Lamar Jackson with an ankle injury.

Healthier than he's been in weeks following Cleveland's bye, Mayfield connected with Jarvis Landry and Austin Hooper on first-half scores as the Browns (7-6) bounced back and beat the Ravens (8-5) after losing to them 15 days ago.

Of course it helped that Jackson went out with a sprained right ankle sustained on the first play of the second quarter. The 2019 NFL MVP was unable to put any weight on the ankle; the Ravens have been overrun by injuries this season. Jackson was replaced by Tyler Huntley.

Cowboys 27, Washington 20

In Landover, Md., Micah Parsons sacked Taylor Heinicke twice and forced a fumble that was returned for a touchdown, helping the Cowboys make good on coach Mike McCarthy's guarantee of winning.

Washington's win streak was snapped at four.

Dallas led 24-0 and 27-8 before Kyle Allen replaced Heinicke and led a 73-yard TD drive. Then Cole Holcomb intercepted Dak Prescott and ran it back for a pick-6. Washington's comeback bid came to an end when Allen fumbled with 2:24 remaining.

The Cowboys staked themselves to such a big lead thanks to a big first-half showing by their defense. Dallas forced four turnovers and had five sacks.

Doran Armstrong recovered the fumble Parsons forced and returned it 37 yards for a touchdown, and Randy Gregory picked off Heinicke. He also forced Allen to fumble on a sack the day after Gregory was

activated off injured reserve.

The Cowboys (9-4) distanced themselves from Washington (6-7) in the NFC East.

Titans 20, Jaguars 0

In Nashville, Tenn., the Tennessee Titans were on the other side of a turnover-fest by getting four interceptions in their first home shutout in more than two decades.

Rashaan Evans, Jayon Brown, Kristian Fulton and Buster Skrine picked off passes from rookie Trevor Lawrence, who hadn't thrown multiple interceptions in a game since his NFL debut.

Tennessee dominated Jacksonville's offensive line, sacking Lawrence three times and prompting four holding calls and a false start. All the interceptions were a direct result of pressure, but not blitzes.

The Titans (9-4) had been on the other end of turnover-filled games their previous two times out, losing to Houston and New England thanks mostly to a combined nine turnovers.

Chargers 37, Giants 21

In Inglewood, Calif., Justin Herbert threw for three touchdowns and Dustin Hopkins added three field goals for the Chargers, who improved to 8-5 and are a game behind the Chiefs going into Thursday night's pivotal AFC West matchup.

Herbert also reached a trio of milestones. He is the first player to reach 30 touchdown passes in his first two seasons; has the most completions by a player through his first two seasons (734); and is the second-fastest player to reach 8,000 career yards (28 games).

The second-year signal caller went 16 of 22 for 204 yards and a touchdown as the Chargers took a 24-7 lead into halftime. His final throw of the

first half was a 59-yard touchdown pass to Jalen Guyton.

The game was tied at 7 after the first quarter before the Chargers broke it open with 30 straight points. Joshua Palmer and Jalen Guyton—who picked up the slack with Keenan Allen on the COVID-19 list—each had TD receptions in the second quarter.

Broncos 38, Lions 10

In Denver, Broncos running backs Javonte Williams and Melvin Gordon each scored a pair of touchdowns and Dre'Mont Jones had a monster game that included two sacks of Jared Goff.

Several Broncos arrived at the stadium wearing No. 88 jerseys and kicker Brandon McManus wore custom cleats featuring the late Demaryius Thomas' famous mile-wide smile. The retired receiver died at his Georgia home on Thursday at age 33.

Then, the Broncos (7-6) took the field with just 10 men in honor of Thomas. The Lions (1-11-1) declined the delay-of-game penalty.

The Broncos got just their second opening-drive touchdown in 29 games under embattled offensive coordinator Pat Shurmur with Williams scoring from 5 yards, carrying safeties Dean Marlowe and Jalen Elliott across the goal line with him.

Falcons 29, Panthers 21

In Charlotte, N.C., Matt Ryan threw for 190 yards and a touchdown, Mykal Walker returned an interception of Cam Newton 66 yards for a touchdown and the Falcons continued to play well on the road.

Cordarrelle Patterson ran for 58 yards and a touchdown for the Falcons (6-7), who improved to 6-2 away from

Mercedes-Benz Stadium and kept their playoff hopes alive.

Newton ran for a 12-yard touchdown but turned over the ball twice and was benched midway through the fourth quarter for P.J. Walker. The Panthers (5-8) turned it over three times in all and have lost eight of their last 10 games under second-year coach Matt Rhule. Newton has lost his last 11 starts as Carolina's starting quarterback dating back to 2018.

Seahawks 33, Texans 13

In Houston, Russell Wilson threw for 260 yards and two touchdowns and the Seahawks won consecutive games for the first time this season.

Seattle coach Pete Carroll earned his 150th regular-season win a week after the Seahawks (5-8) beat San Francisco 30-23. He did it in front of a sparse crowd that appeared to have more Seattle fans than Houston followers. Neon green shirts peppered the stands and chants of 'Seahawks, Seahawks,' echoed through the stadium throughout the game.

Wilson threw a 55-yard TD pass to Tyler Lockett in the second quarter and his 1-yard pass to Gerald Everett and 2-point conversion to Lockett made it 27-13 with about 7 ½ minutes left.

Lockett had 142 yards receiving to give him 1,023 yards this season. He joins Hall of Famer Steve Largent as the only players in franchise history to have at least 1,000 yards receiving in three straight seasons.

Saints 30, Jets 9

In East Rutherford, N.J., Alvin Kamara ran for 120 yards and a touchdown in his return from a four-game absence, and the Saints snapped a five-game losing streak.

Taysom Hill ran for two scores and shook off a banged-up finger on his throwing hand to pass for 175 yards for the Saints (6-7), whose skid was their longest since Sean Payton took over as coach in 2006.

Brett Maher added three field goals and the defense stifled Zach Wilson and New York's short-handed offense as the Jets (3-10) were eliminated from playoff contention. They have missed the postseason 11 straight seasons, tying the franchise's longest drought set from 1970-80. It is also the longest active skid in the NFL.

Hill, who injured his right middle finger in the Saints' previous game, finished 15 of 21 passing and ran for 73 yards on 11 carries.

Kamara, who missed four games with a sprained knee, looked fully healthy again while carrying the ball 27 times in his fifth career 100-yard rushing performance. He also caught four passes for 25 yards.

Durant scores 51 in Nets' 116-104 win over slumping Pistons



DETROIT (AP)—Kevin Durant scored an NBA season-high 51 points in the Brooklyn Nets' 116-104 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Sunday.

With James Harden resting, Durant scored at least 10 points in all four quarters.

"I knew I probably needed to pick up a little more of the scoring tonight," said Durant, who had his seventh 50-point game of his career. "We were turning the ball over more than we should, and I was doing as much of that as anyone, so I figured I better just keep shooting."

Patty Mills added 18 points for the Nets, who outscored Detroit 30-13 in the fourth quarter.

"It was fun just to watch K.D. when he's playing like that," Mills said. "Being a part of it is even better. You don't see many games like he had tonight."

Cade Cunningham had 26 and Frank Jackson added 25 for Detroit, which lost its 12th straight. The Pistons' last win was Nov. 17 against the Pacers, and they still haven't won back-to-back games this season.

"We didn't get this win, but we are moving in the right direction," Jackson said. "I know it doesn't look like that, given all the losses, but we're working hard and getting better."

Detroit also was missing leading scorer Jeremi Grant, who is sidelined indefinitely by a thumb injury.

"We have to play with the guys we have," Pistons coach Dwane Casey said. "We can't think about 'What if Jeremi could play?' We gave ourselves a chance to win the game, but we have to finish one of these out."

Hours after Durant was fined \$25,000 for using multiple expletives at a fan who yelled "Durant, stop crying," on Friday during a game in Atlanta, he also bested Stephen Curry's 50-point total for the league high this season, which Curry did Nov. 8 against Atlanta.

The Pistons led 91-86 after three quarters despite 38 points from Durant, who scored seven in the Nets' 11-0 run to start the fourth. He picked up his fifth foul with 8:46 to play, but stayed on the floor as the Nets expanded the lead to 105-92 midway through the quarter.

"I saw the look in his eyes and knew he didn't want to come out," Nets coach Steve Nash said. "He was just incredible tonight. Not only does he score 51, but he had (nine) assists and (seven) rebounds. He even had a couple blocks and played incredible defense in the fourth quarter."

The Nets led 60-57 at

the half behind Durant's 22 points. Detroit outshot Brooklyn 47.8% to 38.5% in the first half, but struggled with turnovers and on the glass.

Durant also set the record on Sunday for points scored at the Little Caesars Arena, which opened in 2017. He bested Blake Griffin's 50 in 2018, Kyrie Irving's 45 in 2020 and James Harden's 44 last season. Irving and Harden also had their games for the Nets, while Griffin now plays for them.

"I got Blake's record? That's great," Durant said with a laugh. "I didn't know he got 50 here, but this is a new building, so I'm sure that will get broken pretty quickly."

Lakers 106, Magic 94

In Los Angeles, LeBron James scored 14 of his 30 points during Los Angeles' spectacular third quarter, and he added 11 rebounds and 10 assists while the Lakers rolled past the Orlando Magic 106-94 Sunday night for their fifth victory in seven games.

Talen Horton-Tucker scored seven of his 19 points as Los Angeles utterly dominated a close game out of halftime, scoring 23 consecutive points while holding the Magic to 2-for-23 shooting in the third quarter with their field goals scored nearly 10 minutes apart. Los Angeles rode that 36-10 advantage in the third to its second straight win and moved two games above .500 for the first time in four weeks.

Russell Westbrook had 19 points and James secured his 101st career triple-double in the final minutes as the Lakers won their second straight with second-leading scorer Anthony Davis sidelined by left knee soreness. Coach Frank Vogel said examinations of Davis' knee found it structurally sound, and the team anticipates him returning to action soon.

Cole Anthony scored 21 points for the Magic, who went 0-5 on their West Coast trip despite rallying in the fourth quarter.

Franz Wagner added 20 points and seven rebounds, but the Magic responded to Saturday night's last-second loss to the Clippers with a solid first half and a catastrophic third quarter in their 12th loss in 13 games. Orlando dropped to 5-23 despite hitting 13 3-pointers.

Mavericks 103, Thunder 84

In Oklahoma City, Jalen Brunson had 18 points and nine rebounds while starting in place of injured star Luka Doncic, leading Dallas Mavericks over Oklahoma City.

It was the first time this sea-



Brooklyn Nets forward Kevin Durant dunks during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Detroit Pistons, Sunday, Dec. 12, 2021, in Detroit.

AP

son the Mavericks won without Doncic, who experienced a flareup of a previous ankle injury in Friday's game against Indiana and is being held out for back-to-back games.

Maxi Kleber scored 16 points off the Mavericks' bench and fellow reserve Moses Brown added 15 against his former team. Kristaps Porzingis had 13 points and seven rebounds.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 18 points.

Timberwolves 116, Trail Blazers 111

In Portland, Ore., Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 points and

10 rebounds, and Minnesota snapped a five-game losing streak by beating Portland.

Anthony Edwards added 24 points for Minnesota, which also ended an eight-game losing streak in Portland. The loss was Portland's fifth straight.

Anfernee Simons had 26 points off the bench for the Blazers and Damian Lillard returned from an abdomen injury to score 24 points and pull down 11 rebounds.

Bucks 112, Knicks 97

In New York, Khris Middleton scored 24 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo has his first triple-double of the sea-

son to lead Milwaukee over New York.

One of seven Bucks in double-digit scoring, Antetokounmpo had 20 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds. Milwaukee won its second straight game and 10th out of 12 overall.

New York has lost three in a row and seven of 10. In his first NBA start, Quentin Grimes scored 27 for the Knicks and set a team record for the most 3-pointers made in a game by a rookie with seven. Grimes replaced R.J. Barrett in the starting lineup. Derrick Rose replaced Alec Burks and scored 18 points.

Spurs 112, Pelicans 97

In San Antonio, Jakob Poeltl had 24 points and 12 rebounds, Derrick White added 24 points, and San Antonio beat New Orleans.

Dejounte Murray added 10 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists as San Antonio won for the fifth time in nine games. White added nine assists and eight rebounds.

Brandon Ingram had 27 points to lead New Orleans, while Jonas Valanciunas added 17 points and 12 rebounds. The Pelicans have lost four of six as they try to rebound from a nine-game skid during the first few weeks of the season.

LaVine, Brown give Bulls 9 players in NBA health protocols



CHICAGO (AP)—Bulls star Zach LaVine and backup forward Troy Brown Jr. have entered the NBA's health and safety protocols, giving Chicago nine players on the list.

The team confirmed Sunday that LaVine and Brown joined leading scorer DeMar DeRozan, Matt Thomas, Coby White, Javonte Green, Derrick Jones Jr., Ayo Dosunmu and recently signed Stanley Johnson. That left the Bulls with nine available players. Teams need eight in order to play.

Chicago's next game is against Detroit at home on Tuesday. LaVine and Brown both played in Saturday's

loss at Miami.

The resurgent Bulls were third in the Eastern Conference behind Brooklyn and Milwaukee at 17-10.

LaVine, a first-time All-Star last season and gold medal winner with the U.S. Olympic team, was seventh in the NBA in scoring at 26 points per game. He is averaging 5.3 rebounds and 4.2 assists.

Brown is averaging 4.3 points in 18 games.

Players in the health and safety protocols must be sidelined at least 10 days or record two negative tests in a 24-hour period before they can resume basketball activities.

Chicago Bulls guard Zach LaVine (8) dribbles away from Miami Heat center Dewayne Dedmon during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Saturday, Dec. 11, 2021, in Miami.

AP

COVID-19 boosters on backburner for most pro sports leagues

By STEPHEN WHYNO
AP SPORTS WRITER

The push to get vaccine booster shots is not an immediate priority in most of the top sports leagues in North America even with delta and omicron variants spreading. The NFL and NHL have no current plans to follow the NBA's lead and require players, coaches and staff to get a COVID-19 booster shot to be considered fully vaccinated under league protocols — even as

cases continue to crop up. Five NHL games have been postponed so far this season, with two teams getting briefly shut down to quell outbreaks, and high-profile vaccinated stars like Joel Embiid and Ben Roethlisberger have missed action after testing positive. It is a far cry from 2020 when the NFL, NBA, NHL and Major League Baseball rescheduled dozens of games, but the pandemic is still proving disruptive.

NFL and NHL officials are instead touting current vaccination rates above 90% as the reason virus cases so far have largely been mild or asymptomatic. MLB is in a lockout that has cut off contact with players, but even before that there was no vaccine mandate or road map to add boosters.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control has recommended booster shots for those 16 and older. None of the major four North American pro sports leagues has a vaccine mandate.

"We're not at that point yet," NHLPA executive director Don Fehr said when asked about making boosters count as being fully vaccinated for the league's approximately 700 players. "We're obviously in ongoing consultation with our doctors and when and if they say, 'Look, all things considered we think this is what should be done or needs to be done or is a good idea if individuals want to do it,' that's what we'll transmit to players."

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said a plan similar to the NBA's had not yet been discussed. The NHL has 99.9% of players on active rosters vaccinated and is recommending but not requiring boosters.

"Obviously (boosters are) becoming more highly recommended every day, so obviously we have encouraged the clubs and the players to get boosters at their earliest possible date," Daly said. "Whether it becomes part of the definition of fully vaccinated, I'm not sure it will or won't. That's

going to be a decision ultimately made by the medical professionals."

New York Islanders general manager Lou Lamoriello, whose team along with Ottawa was shut down by the NHL, said boosters were made available and the uptake was high.

"Most of our players have received a booster shot at this point," Lamoriello said. "We had no pushback on any of our recommendations with the vaccination, whatever it might have been—whether it was Pfizer, whether it was Moderna, whether it was Johnson & Johnson. Whatever their choice was, we tried to make it available."

The NBA told teams that those who do not receive an additional vaccine dose by Dec. 17 would be subject to stricter protocols, which can include extra testing. The league said as of this week 60% of NBA players and staff have received a booster shot.

"If you can get it, you should get it," said Philadelphia 76ers



A syringe is prepared with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at a clinic in the Norristown Public Health Center in Norristown, Pa., on Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2021.

coach Doc Rivers, whose team has dealt with a number of COVID-19 player absences. "(We should send) any good message we can send about it in doing the right thing."

The NFL, which reports 94.4% of players are fully vaccinated, is also not yet making a booster shot part of its protocol. "Obviously the public

health guidance is moving us towards embracing the boosters," chief medical officer Dr. Allen Sills told NFL Network last week.

For now, the topic is left to individual teams. Seattle coach Pete Carroll said the Seahawks scheduled a booster day for players, coaches and staff this week.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Brooklyn	19	8	.704	—
Philadelphia	15	12	.556	4
Boston	13	14	.481	6
Toronto	12	14	.462	6½
New York	12	15	.444	7

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	16	11	.593	—
Washington	15	12	.556	1
Charlotte	15	13	.536	1½
Atlanta	13	13	.500	2½
Orlando	5	23	.179	11½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	18	10	.643	—
Chicago	17	10	.630	½
Cleveland	16	12	.571	2
Indiana	12	16	.429	6
Detroit	4	22	.154	13

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	16	11	.593	—
Dallas	13	13	.500	2½
San Antonio	10	16	.385	5½
Houston	8	18	.308	7½
New Orleans	8	21	.276	9

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	19	7	.731	—
Denver	13	13	.500	6
Minnesota	12	15	.444	7½
Portland	11	16	.407	8½
Oklahoma City	8	18	.308	11

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	21	4	.840	—
Golden State	21	5	.808	½
L.A. Clippers	15	12	.556	7
L.A. Lakers	15	13	.536	7½
Sacramento	11	16	.407	11

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New England	9	4	0	.692	350	200
Buffalo	7	6	0	.538	363	229
Miami	6	7	0	.462	254	288
N.Y. Jets	3	10	0	.231	226	397

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Tennessee	9	4	0	.692	324	290
Indianapolis	7	6	0	.538	371	283
Houston	2	11	0	.154	177	356
Jacksonville	2	11	0	.154	180	340

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	8	5	0	.615	304	284
Cincinnati	7	6	0	.538	354	293
Cleveland	7	6	0	.538	278	289
Pittsburgh	6	6	1	.500	272	322

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Kansas City	9	4	0	.692	351	268
L.A. Chargers	8	5	0	.615	351	336
Denver	7	6	0	.538	275	228
Las Vegas	6	7	0	.462	283	360

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Dallas	9	4	0	.692	380	287
Philadelphia	6	7	0	.462	337	291
Washington	6	7	0	.462	266	324
N.Y. Giants	4	9	0	.308	232	310

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Tampa Bay	10	3	0	.769	410	297
Atlanta	6	7	0	.462	245	353
New Orleans	6	7	0	.462	304	285
Carolina	5	8	0	.385	257	282

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Green Bay	10	3	0	.769	328	272
Minnesota	6	7	0	.462	344	333
Chicago	4	9	0	.308	231	332
Detroit	1	11	1	.115	213	354

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Arizona	10	2	0	.833	343	224
L.A. Rams	8	4	0	.667	336	270
San Francisco	7	6	0	.538	329	301
Seattle	5	8	0	.385	272	262

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NMI

From Page 20

hand, had Brian Lubao as the first PK taker and he faltered, as TanHoldings goalie Chris Aninzo pushed the ball out.

After the NMI U18's initial miss, Taka Borja and Daniel Pablo converted their attempts to knot the count, while Joshua Mendez muffed the third shot for TanHoldings. Tenorio then unloaded the fourth PK shot for TanHoldings and put the team back on top, 3-2. However, the NMI U18 equalized anew, thanks to Dev Bachani's PK that crossed over the left upper portion of the goal.

With the match tied and each team down to one shooter, all eyes were on the opposing teams' goalies with Aninzo facing Hodges. The NMI U18 goalie won the one-on-one showdown after sliding to his right just in time to block Aninzo's shot and push the ball out.

Next up on the hot spot was Kohtaro Goto and he delivered under pressure by making the shot over Aninzo, who tried to use his right hand to stop the ball, but the shot went a bit to his left and over his hand.

Meanwhile, the title game



Kohtaro Goto, seen here controlling the ball, scored the game-winning PK in their 4-3 victory over TanHoldings FC last Sunday.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

in the Hafa Adai Cup was also played last Sunday and results

will be published in *Saipan Tribune's* Wednesday issue.

YUKO

From Page 20

Laolao. I'm very lucky because of that and I won the very first McDonald's tournament," she said.

The 55-year-old said her most memorable hole of the tournament was hole No 7.

"I didn't win a closest to the pin but I got a birdie in hole No. 7. First time I got into the green from the backside. That

was about 200 yards!"

Togawa said she will purchase Christmas gifts for her family after winning the ladies flight's top purse of \$500.

Asked what winning the inaugural Ronald McDonald House of Charities Golf Tournament means for his stint as women's coach for next year's Pacific Mini Games here in the CNMI, Togawa said this: "I want to convey to the players of the national team the fun

of seriously challenging golf tournaments."

Coming in second to Togawa is her fellow CNMI Women's Golf Association member Sherlyn Jones, who came away with a 9-over 81 (41-40), while third place went to Jean Me Ae who shot an 89 (46-43). Jones went home with \$300, while Ae pocketed \$200.

In the B flight, Domingo Atalig was promoted to A flight after winning the divi-

JALEN

From Page 20

my social studies professor did not have the adequate training due to work. So she asked me if I wanted to run it for her, I agreed. Also, I always wanted to run a full-blown marathon, it was always on my bucket list as a running and I am so glad that I got to run it here in Hawaii," he said.

The Honolulu Marathon was challenging to say the least, especially for Lucido who admitted that he had zero training for a marathon.

"I was training but not specially for a marathon. I trained just to keep in shape and be ready for unexpected things to happen like these."

The son of Joey and Gemma Lucido of Chalan Kanoa said he was still thankful that weather conditions yesterday helped him finish the marathon.

"Thankfully it was not so hot. It was sprinkling at first, then the sun came out. It was pretty windy at Mile 17 to the point where I could feel the wind dragging me," he said.

Lucido had a bunch of individuals he would like to thank for his participation in the 2021 Honolulu Marathon.

"First off I would like to thank my social studies professor, Summer Maunakea, for sponsoring me for this marathon and also my two classmates that supported me at the finish line. I also like to thank my coach, Edward Dela Cruz Jr., who shaped the runner I am now. His training programs really helped with my strength, endurance, and speed. His program was built for half marathon so I just wanted to see for myself if I could apply the methods he taught and if it would make me survive a full one," he said.

Dela Cruz, who is also the president of Run Saipan, congratulated Lucido for completing his first ever marathon and said he will always be proud of him.

"I'm proud of him. Jalen took all the info I taught him and applied it stunningly well. The training program I had him under was to be able to run any race up to a half marathon comfortably. When he told me he was going to run a full marathon I knew he could do it because he's been consistent with his training and he is a very exceptional runner. Couldn't be more proud of him," he said.

sion with an 82 (42-40), while Juan "Shine" Tenorio and Ben Pelisamen completed the Top 3 after both finished with identical 83s. Tenorio (41-42), however, edged Pelisamen (40-43) in a scorecard tiebreak to take second place. Like the ladies flight, 1-2-3 in the B flight earned \$500, \$300, and \$200, respectively.

Results of the C flight, senior flight, and super senior flight will be published in the

next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

Established in 1987, the Ronald McDonald House Charities has helped over 38,000 families from the CNMI, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Palau, and Hawaii. It's not directly affiliated with McDonald's Corp. or any of its restaurants and relies heavily on the support of the community to continue delivering services for those in need.



Brady sets completions record, throws 700th TD in OT win **PAGE 17**

Saipan Tribune Sports



COVID-19 boosters on backburner for most pro sports leagues **PAGE 19**

20 TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2021

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

NMI U18 pulls off thriller in shootout

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The NMI Boys U18 National Team escaped with a 4-3 win in a penalty shootout against TanHoldings Football Club to clinch the MSL Cup in the Marianas Soccer League Fall Season 2021 last Sunday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Kobleville.



Kohtaro Goto hit the game-winning PK, while goalie Dane Hodges made the big defensive stop down the stretch of the closely fought finale to rule the season and



Members of the NMI Boys U18 National Team pose for a photo before their playoff game against Paire in the MSL Cup in the Marianas Soccer League Fall Season 2021 early this month at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Kobleville. The NMI U18 won over Paire and also defeated TanHoldings FC in the finals, 4-3.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

foil TanHoldings' title bid and attempt for a perfect season. TanHoldings came

into the finals seeded No. 1, as it swept the regular season (5-0-0), while the NMI

U18 lurked behind with its 4-0-1 win-draw-loss record. The NMI U18 and TanHold-

ings went on to arrange their championship showdown after eliminating Eleven Tiger,

2-1, and Paire Football Club, 2-0 respectively.

In the finals, TanHoldings went toe-to-toe against the NMI U18 with Richard Steele leading the latter in regulation and Sunjoon Tenorio doing the same for the former. Steele gave the NMI U18 the upper hand with his goal in the 17th minute and stretched the lead to 2-0 with another conversion in the 72nd minute.

Then just when the NMI U18 thought they could cruise to the finals win, Tenorio came to TanHoldings' rescue in the closing minutes, starting off with his goal in the 81st. Tenorio followed it up with the equalizer just a few seconds before regulation ended, as he took an off-balanced shot inside the penalty area. The game remained in a deadlock after the nine-minute extra time, bringing the finale into a shootout.

In the decider, TanHoldings got off to a good start, thanks to Michiteru Mita and Ronnel Ocanada, who took the first two shots and hit their target. The NMI U18, on the other

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Jalen Lucido runs first marathon

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Run Saipan volunteer Jalen Lucido checked a box off his bucket list after the 23-year-old Marianas High School alumnus competed in his first ever marathon.

The University of Hawaii at Manoa student competed in yesterday's 2021 Honolulu Marathon and completed the 42-kilometer run in 4:42:37.

"It was grueling. I would say the first 14 miles was okay but the rest was all heart," he said of the marathon that started from Ala Moana Beach Park on Ala Moana Boulevard and finished close to the Kapiolani Park Bandstand.

Lucido said competing in the Honolulu Marathon kind of came by accident after his social studies professor, Summer Maunakeafor, pulled out from the event and let him take her spot instead.

"I ran the marathon because

See JALEN on Page 19



Jalen Lucido, second from right, poses with, from left, his social science teacher Summer Maunakeafor, and classmates Kailia and Jordan after completing the 2021 Honolulu Marathon in Hawaii.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Ladies flight winner Yuko Togawa, fourth from left, poses with, from left, tournament director Vicente "Ben" Babauta, McDonald's Guam and Saipan co-owner Marcia Ayuyu, runner-up Sherlyn Jones, third place Jean Me Ae, and McDonald's Guam and Saipan owner Jose "Joe" Ayuyu during the awards banquet of the inaugural Ronald McDonald House of Charities Golf Tournament last Saturday at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort.

MARK RABAGO

Yuko Togawa tops ladies flight

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Yuko Togawa proved to all and sundry that she's the right choice as women's national coach after topping the ladies flight of the inaugural Ronald McDonald House of Charities Golf Tournament



last Saturday at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort. The Kamakura, Kanagawa Prefecture in Japan native shot a 7-over 79 to rule the women's field after posting a 41 in the front nine and a 38 in the back nine.

Togawa, who has been playing the sport for the past 16 years, said last Saturday's inaugural Ronald McDonald House of Charities Golf Tournament had perfect weather conditions.

"Weather was fine and very nice conditions at

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